AN ENGLISHMAN'S

MAJOR GUY DU MAURIER

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AN ENGLISHMAN'S HOME

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[See page 127

"CURSE THEM! OH, CURSE THEM ALL!"

AN ENGLISHMAN'S HOME

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY

MAJOR GUY DU MAURIER, D.S.O.

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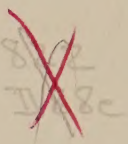

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CHARACTERS

Mr. Brown. Fifty-five, of middle height, thick-set, gray; clean-shaved, with close-cropped mutton-chop whiskers. Rather red face, getting fat about the back of his neck. City man, say a merchant in Berlin wools; middle class—rather near the bottom of that class. Shrewd, but not very intelligent. Wears a city man's clothes, except the coat, which is a very old and comfortable Norfolk, made by a cheap ready-made tailor; stupid trousers—shiny, very kneed, and a little short.

Reggie Brown. His eldest son, about twenty-eight. About five feet ten inches, fair, fat, clean-shaved—going to be like his father. Wears very commonplace suit of dittoes, rather tight for him, stick-up collar, red tie, and pumps.

Syd Brown. Younger son, about twelve. Tall for his age, very thin, pale-faced, and rather spotty, with a sharp, sly sort of face. Dank, light-brown hair. He wears a very high up-and-down collar, blue knickerbockers and stockings, and slippers. No waistcoat, and a faded maroon blazer with yellow braiding and a crossed tennis-bat on the pocket. Smokes fags.

Geoffrey Smith. Twenty-five, short, thin, narrow-chest-

ed, sloping shoulders, knock-kneed and lark-heeled; dark hair growing far back, and sticking up a little on the crown; runaway chin and bad teeth, with a thin neck and large apple; a dark-brown mustache which, from much cutting, sticks out like a toothbrush. Wears a brown suit with a faint white line on it, very new, ready-made brown boots (button), showing short, thick, deformed feet; a crude purple tie and a stick-up collar.

Paul Robinson. Twenty-eight, slight, and of middle height; nice face, rather pale, and looks delicate. If he were well dressed and had a better color would look a nice fellow. Dressed in service-dress of a private in the Volunteers, fitting very badly, being two sizes too large for him.

Maggie Brown. Twenty-one, nice-looking, clean, dark girl, neatly dressed, with a strong, clear voice.

Amy Brown. Eighteen, tall girl, full figure—handsome, but rather in a cold way; high complexion, loud voice, loud laugh. A good sort, a little overdressed in a cheap suburban way.

Ada Jones. Twenty-one, very unattractive girl, flat-chested and thin-faced; pince-nez, frizzy hair done up elaborately; cheap silver jewelery; ugly feet in tight, high-heeled shoes.

Captain Prince Yoland. Tall, fair Nearlander; thick-jowled and thick-necked; very short hair, slight mustache. Cavalry uniform covered with mud.

Lieutenant Rian Hobart. Same regiment.

Sergeant Thol. Nearland Cavalry.

CHARACTERS

Sergeant Garth. Nearland Cavalry.

Captain Finch. Officer of English Volunteers.

Second Lieutenant Jackson. Officer of English Volunteers.

Color Sergeant Harris. Officer of English Volunteers.

Doctor. Officer of English Volunteers.

Captain Lindsay. Adjutant of English Volunteers.

Soldiers. Typical Nearland Cavalry and Nearland Infantry.

English Volunteers. A mixed lot.

SCENE

THE action of the play takes place in the "playroom" of Mr. Brown's house, "The Firs," at Wickham, in Essex.

The playroom is a large, comfortable room on the ground floor, furnished in a cheerful and homely but essentially suburban manner.

It is a room that is obviously lived in. The chairs are comfortable; tables littered with books, papers, and evidences of the occupations of the Browns.

One or two prints of popular pictures, framed in maple, on the wall—for example, *Coming of Age in the Olden Time*, a couple of Marcus Stone's.

A piano and much littered music—comic operas, some two-steps, and a few comic songs.

Many photographs in frames everywhere—all the leading actors and actresses.

A statuet of Britannia on the mantelpiece.

At back of stage, French windows leading on to a lawn, fireplace down left, with door right down left. A cosey bow-window with window-seat on right; another door down right.

THE FIRST ACT

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THE FIRST ACT

When the curtain goes up it is ten o'clock in the morning —boxing-day. The gas is lit in the playroom, and there is a dense fog outside seen through the windows.

Maggie Brown is reading, comfortably sitting in the window-seat. Reggie Brown, at a table, is doing limericks, telegrams, wit competitions, etc.; all the comic papers, much foolscap, envelopes, sixpenny P. O's. He is wrapped in the throes of composition. Mr. Brown is back, in front of the French windows, practising diabolo; there are several pairs of sticks, and cones of all weights and sizes. He practises the posture without using cone for some time, and is advanced to practise with cone as the Act goes on. Near him is Syd Brown, with several books on the game of diabolo, from which he reads directions. Standing with his back to the fire, Geoffrey Smith is reading from a football

paper called *The Goal Post*. AMY BROWN is lolling in an arm-chair facing him. ADA JONES sits on the arm of the same chair.

GEOFFREY [reads]. "After a pretty exchange of long bowls . . . "

[BROWN throws diabolo cone up, and it drops.]

SYD. Look out, Dad! Heads!

REGGIE. Steady, Dad!

BROWN. Sorry, sorry; don't let me interrupt you, Geoffrey. Go on with your account of the football mach—very interesting.

GEOFFREY [lights cigarette]. Where was I? [Reads.] "After a pretty exchange of long bowls between the backs, which kept the heads of the forwards up and gave them a breather, the sphere settled down at the Blues' front door and looked as if it had come to stay, although 'Long Jervis' and A. P. Henstock did their best to make a parting guest of it—and a speedy one at that. But the East Finchley Friday front line were all over them, like our fair sisters round the shop-walkers at a summer sale, and the Pirates' goal looked ten times its proper size to their anxious supporters. But after a pretty bit of head work by Kelvin and 'Scotty' Smith, relief

came. Borrodaile got his hands between the ball and his last meal, and the referee gave a foul—on appeal."

[Throws cigarette away.]

SYD. Oh! I shouldn't call that a foul.

GEOFFREY. Well, strictly speaking, perhaps not. But, you see, when a man's writing a real picturesque account like this he can't be expected to call everything by the correct name—sort of poetic license, you know.

AMY. Yes, of course, I understand that. I call it pretty neat, don't you, Geoffrey?

GEOFFREY. Splendid! That touch about old Borrodaile's last meal—pretty smart; he don't stint himself, does J. M. What do you think?

ADA. I don't suppose he'd eat much just before a match, would he? My brother says . . .

GEOFFREY. "The booing of the crowd at the decision of the luckless official showed pretty clearly which team had the largest number of supporters among the assembled sportsmen. Still, shouts of 'Well done, Artie!' were sufficiently conspicuous to prove that Captain Arthur Simpson was not entirely out of favor, and that the Pirates' stock, though below par, was not entirely unsalable."

AMY. Good old Artie—don't suppose he cared, he's pretty used to being bored.

GEOFFREY. Why should he mind? He's paid for it.

REGGIE. I think it's all rot, booing the referree. It doesn't do any good, and he probably sees more and knows more of the game than any of the crowd looking on.

GEOFFREY. Now you're talking through your hat. My friends, don't you believe that sort of thing. The referee is paid by the gate, and the crowd pays for the refer—and if you're paying a man you've surely a right to tell him what you think of him. What do you say, Mr. B.?

BROWN. The right of every Englishman to express his approval or disapproval with the work of those who are in a sense servants of the public is a principle with which I am in complete sympathy. We—er—are a free people, and we should never neglect an opportunity for impressing that fact on—er—those who may be inclined to doubt it.

GEOFFREY. I don't think old Artie doubts it, to do him justice. He's been laid out twice in the North.

BROWN. I have no doubt he deserved it.

ADA. My brother says—

AMY. Push off, Geoff.

GEOFFREY. "This relieved the pressure—cleared

the air and the goal—and once more the backs gave an exhibition which did little good, but hurt no one except perhaps the uncomplaining spheroid who took it lying down—or perhaps we should say flying down—and up.

"Little Teddy took the pass on the wing, and, jinking closely, raced along, hugging the cushion, at lightning speed, steadied at the distance and centred full in front of the E. F. F. goal."

AMY and ADA. Yes, yes—go on.

GEOFFREY. "George took it on the hop, and, shooting hard and high, netted the mud orange within ten seconds of time."

SYD. Hurrah!

GEOFFREY. "This gave the match to the Pirates, and although the supporters of the Buff and Treacle felt the loss of their money, and showed their feelings in an attempt to mob the referee, we venture to assert that when the initial soreness had worn off, not one of the fifty thousand true English sportsmen who watched the game went away with the feeling that he had wasted time or money in spending it on one of the finest games it has ever been our good-fortune to witness."

AMY. How perfectly ripping—and to think we missed it, and all on account of the rotten old fog.

ADA. We're missing everything—that, and the other match on Wednesday, and the matinée on Saturday.

AMY. Oh, bother the matinée! We can see that any time, but we shall never see another match like that—eh, Geoff?

GEOFFREY. Well, I wouldn't go so far as to say *that!*

AMY. Just our rotten luck that the match came off at all. What price the fog down at Barn Oaks?

GEOFFREY. Well, you see what this fellow says: [Reads.] "Although the dense fog kept many thousands of the less ardent away, some thousands of true footballers ran the risk of disappointment, and were rewarded by finding on arrival that a slight and presumably purely local clearing just gave them a view of the ground, and enabled the game to proceed." Great Jehoshaphat, that fellow can write! It's almost as good as seeing the match one's self to read a real stirring account of it, eh, Amy?

AMY. Well, I'm not so struck on literature myself, and I'd rather have been there—and seen it.

ADA. My brother saw it—he goes everywhere. He had five shillings on West Finchley—I bet he booed that umpire a bit.

GEOFFREY. Well, if I had a gift for writing like

that chap, I'd chuck the old office mighty quick, I can tell you. Now, Maggie, you're a judge of real literature—what do you think of it?

MAGGIE. Well, Geoffrey, it's a great subject. But, do you know, I wasn't listening very carefully, so I can't say—and I don't quite understand it. I think there is too much—too much—what d'you call it?—metaphor. . . .

GEOFFREY. Don't you like it, Maggie? Remember, he's paid by the line.

MAGGIE. Ah! For instance, now, what does "doing good work with his right" mean?

GEOFFREY. Why, that means he brought off some amazing fine kicks with his right foot. And he's strong on his rights, too, is Jimmy.

SYD. Now, Dad, you must keep that left shoulder steady. Just listen to what Plum Warner says: "The left upper arm must be kept rigid with the elbow slightly forward, with a play of not more than two or three inches—"

BROWN. Well, Sydney, I am trying. But there are so many points to think of. What's he say again about the grip of the left hand?

SYD. Wait a minute! [Reads.] "The stick is to be held lightly in the left hand—not more than two inches from the end, most of the work being done

by the first two fingers." Now you're using your thumb too much, Governor.

BROWN. Yes, that's all very well; but the Badminton book says: "The stick should be held at least half-way up, and full in the palm of the hand, and the elbow firmly glued to the left hip."

SYD. Yes; but that's with a thirty-inch stick and a ten-ounce cone—you must remember the difference.

BROWN. But, Sydney, my boy, that article in the *Times* by the ex-Minister of the Interior says that there are several ways of starting, and that every beginner had better find out the way that suited him best.

SYD. Oh well, if you want to play the game that way, do. But you won't get any style—you'll never be any class at it.

REGGIE I say, tell me a rhyme to "Wormwood Scrubbs."

GEOFFREY. No, it wasn't; it was Alf Gagpinch sang that. He's got a corking new song now, about the strike. I tell you it catches on all right—it's a fizzer.

MAGGIE. How does it fizz?

GEOFFREY. Amy, you can play the chorus.

AMY. What's that, Geoff?

GEOFFREY. You know—"Oh! oh! the G. P. O."

[REGGIE picks up paper, and exit. When song begins GEOFFREY sings to an amazingly commonplace music-hall tune.]

(*Chorus*) What's the good of a penny stamp
When the G. P. O.'s on strike?
What's the good of a telegram
When the postman's copped the spike?
You can't get on to the telephone,
You've got to get on to your bike,
Or tickle the street
On your plates of meat,
And all because of the strike!

SYD. Hurrah! That's fine—how does it go on?

GEOFFREY. Can't remember any more. I've only heard it four times.

ADA. My brother knows the whole of one verse, and bits of the others. He's heard it lots of times. He's very smart at picking up those songs.

GEOFFREY. Oh, is he?

BROWN. Well, I may be old-fashioned, and of course these music-hall singers being, so to speak, servants of the public, must please the public. But I don't approve of this turning of a national disgrace into a subject for a comic song.

GEOFFREY. Hear, hear—the ayes have it.

BROWN. Yes; but owing to this confounded telegraphic and postal strike, business is at a standstill. The money market has ceased to exist. We are in the dark as to the fluctuation of trade in our own capital or what our rivals across the seas are doing—and except by most devious and lengthy means we hear nothing—absolutely nothing—from the other great business centres in the kingdom. The progress of events in our great oversea dependencies is hidden from us, and what news we do get as to the daily movements of our aristocracy . . . is not always to be relied upon.

GEOFFREY. Well, I don't so much mind all that. We get most of the football news, anyway, and if I could only get some sort of idea of how the test matches are going I could bear the disappointment about the Upper Ten.

ADA. There was a lot about Romeo Clarkson in the *Sunday Times*. My brother knows his dresser, and says it's true—every word.

GEOFFREY. Does he?

BROWN. I repeat, sir, that this strike is a disgrace to England. These men are public servants and owe a duty to the country, and I, for one, think that that public duty should come before any private

discomfort or personal grievance they may suffer from.

GEOFFREY. Cheers—some laughter!

MAGGIE. You ought to be in the House, Dad. You'd make 'em sit up.

BROWN. If I had a seat, I think I could make things uncomfortable for the—the—er—

MAGGIE. The man who sat next you, anyway.

GEOFFREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point—

AMY. Well, that's better than sitting down on one.

GEOFFREY. That puts you in, Amy. Score, 2 love. Ha! ha! ha!

[Enter REGGIE.]

REGGIE. I wish to goodness you'd all be quiet for a bit and help. It's impossible to think seriously, or do any work while you're making so much noise. Look here, perhaps you can suggest a last line for this limerick in "Flip-Buts":

A man from the Isle of Wight
Came home to his wife rather tight,
Her legs were both game,
And her left arm the same—
Ti tum, te ti tum, te ti tum.

GEOFFREY. Yes, but that don't rhyme.

REGGIE. Oh, you're very funny, aren't you? I

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thought of putting: "And so he stopped out all ni-ight."

AMY. Don't, Reggie, you'll hurt yourself.

REGGIE. It's all very well to rot, but you can't think of anything better. Now, Maggie, you suggest.

MAGGIE. I'm afraid I wasn't listening. Just say it again, will you?

[REGGIE repeats the limerick.]

"She did some good work with her right."

GEOFFREY. Not bad, for you, Maggie.

REGGIE. Can't you think of anything better?

MAGGIE. I'm afraid not—the fog's got into my brain.

ADA. Oh, don't talk of the fog—it's got into everything. My father says—

GEOFFREY. Well, there's points about the fog, too. Had a jolly good day off at the office on Friday because of it. Day before, I left early to attend my aunt's christening, lost my way to the church, and found I was looking on at Preston Knight Errants getting the knock from Hornsey Crusaders—good game it was too, and I hadn't got a thirst on me when it was over—oh, dear no!—after smoking two packets of cigs and shouting till I nearly cracked my laryngitis—saving your presence, Ada.

ADA. Oh, don't mind me, Geoff—my brother says worse things than that!

GEOFFREY. Oh! So after that, Jimmie Hall and a pal of his—a real sport he was, in Spencer and Watton's city branch—and yours obedient, went and had a soup, fish, *and* a follow at Benoni's, and took three front-row velvets at the Oxford. More shouting, more cigs, and, mark you, more thirst. So we went large in the supper line. I tell you, we made the waiter stare—and caught the last train by the edge of the buffer. It was a night! There wasn't much change out of a sov. by the time we got back to our ancestral halls. And I don't mind telling you that I was a bit blindo, and when I woke next morning, after a fair old "Here we go round the mulberry bush," I felt more like going and lying in the poultry-yard and playing with the chickens than facing the office.

[Enter PAUL.]

Morning, Paul. Hello, Kitchener!

PAUL. Good-morning, everybody.

GEOFFREY. Not a drum was heard—not a bloomin' one. *And*, as we're old friends, Paul, we don't mind telling you the reason.

AMY. We haven't got a drum.

GEOFFREY. Thank you, Amy.

PAUL. I'm sorry there wasn't any music.

GEOFFREY. Oh, if you want some, Amy will oblige, on the piano, with "The Return of the Soldier"—after the pubs were closed.

AMY. Don't worry about him, Geoff—go and see the Follies.

ADA. My brother has seen the Follies twice.

PAUL. Well, Geoff, you seem in good form.

GEOFFREY. Oh, I'm merry and bright, thank you—can sit up and take a bit of nourishment between meals. But what's your entertainment—going to a levée, or is it private theatricals, and you're dressed for the part of the Battle of Waterloo Junction?

PAUL. Well, the fact is, I was down to do some target practice to-day. But I'm afraid it's too thick.

GEOFFREY. Target practice! Look at him, ladies and gentlemen. Spends his afternoons, when he might be encouraging sport by cheering on the winning team, dressed up like that, lying on his delicate chest in the mud, trying to make holes in a defenceless target.

PAUL. Bet you couldn't hit one, Geoff.

GEOFFREY. Wrong again, Blucher. Shooting's one of my strong points. Not targets, though, bless you—something more sporting for me.

AMY. Geoff shot three sea-gulls at Westgate this summer.

GEOFFREY. And one of 'em was flying, too, and that's more than your old targets can do.

REGGIE. Dry up, Geoff. Look here, Paul, can you give me a notion for one of these pictures in the Repartee Competition in *Tip-top Tips?* You see that dog—well, the tramp says to the gentleman, "That's a nice little dawg you've got there, mister."

PAUL. Yes, I see.

REGGIE. Well, now, what does the other man say?

PAUL. How should I know, Reggie?

REGGIE. No, but what would you say?

PAUL. Well, I don't think it is much of a dog, and I suppose I should say so.

REGGIE. But, man, it's got to be witty, or sarcastic, or something.

PAUL. Well, Mr. Brown, how are you getting on?

BROWN. Pretty well, Paul, pretty well, I think; but it takes time.

PAUL. Oh, by the way, I've brought you a *Daily Halfpenny* from the station.

BROWN. What! That's capital, Paul; how did you get it?

PAUL. There was a carriage full of them going

down the line; I was lucky to get one—swarms of people waiting for them.

BROWN. What do I owe you for it?

PAUL. Oh, that's all right, Mr. Brown.

[Exit for paper.]

BROWN. Nonsense, my dear Paul, nonsense! You bought it for me, and I've not seen a paper for days.

GEOFFREY. What price the *Goal Post?*

BROWN. Ah yes, of course. Very interesting and all that, especially for you younger people. But I meant a paper with news in it—news of the great world, you know.

[Enter PAUL with paper.]

Now, Paul, how much was it?

PAUL. Well, I got it for two shillings, after a bit of an argument.

GEOFFREY. What! Really!

MAGGIE. Bravo!

BROWN. Well, I must say I think the *Daily Halfpenny* people deserve it. They've got enterprise. How they get the news with which they fill their paper is a mystery to me.

GEOFFREY. Is it?

PAUL. They've got a motor service all over England, I believe.

GEOFFREY. Don't you believe it. The staff sit

in the cellar and read it off the gas-meter, as if it were a tape-machine.

AMY. Well, Dad, get a move on. Tell us what the great world's doing.

BROWN. There's a leading article on the strike, which—er—quite rightly lays the blame, and apparently the whole blame, on the idiotic inertia of the present Government.

GEOFFREY. Pass along, please—pass along.

BROWN. Another long article on the fog, which seems—to—

AMY. Cut the fog, Dad. What else?

BROWN. Ah! And what looks like a most interesting article on "The Christmas Festival—Ancient and Modern."

GEOFFREY. Can't say *when* at the moment, but I fancy I've read that somewhere. Does it begin, "Christmas is upon us once more."

[REGGIE picks up papers, and exit. GEOFFREY stops speaking a second, watching him off. Then on with speech.]

"Christmas, with all its old associations; Christmas, with its universal message of peace and good-will, etc.?"

BROWN. No, Geoffrey, it does *not*. It says, "The

superstition that a hard Christmas was heralded by a plenteous display of the red fruit of the holly-tree has this year failed to deserve the respect due to its age. Although the winter is hard, the holly berries are slow in assuming that ruddy hue in which their clusters look most attractive." Now that's very prettily put, I think.

GEOFFREY. I don't think! Give me the other beginning.

AMY. I'd rather have the two shillings than either of them.

ADA. What would you do with two shillings, Amy?

PAUL. Well, Mr. Brown, I must be going.

BROWN. Where are you going to, Paul?

PAUL. Well, I'm going to shoot on the ranges. But I'm afraid there's too much fog.

BROWN. Perhaps it's clearer down there.

PAUL. I'm going to bike over and see. Rather a general nuisance, isn't it? What do you think's the reason of it?

BROWN. Of the fog, you mean?

PAUL. Yes.

BROWN. I am unable to say exactly what are the physical causes which originally gave rise to it. But I do state that its duration is unprecedented,

and that something ought to be done—some steps should be taken. Had the present Government only met the difficulty at the beginning and showed some energy and consideration for the public, I venture to state that—er—they—would—er—

GEOFFREY. Have you put the wind up it—eh, Right Honorable?

BROWN. Perhaps you have caught my meaning, Geoffrey, and expressed it in your own way.

PAUL. What are you all going to do, eh, Amy?

AMY. Looks as if it will end in blind-man's-buff. But what we want to do if it clears is—go over and see the Cup Tie. You come with us, Paul, and keep the crowd in order.

PAUL. No, thanks, Amy. If it clears I shall go to the range to shoot.

GEOFFREY. Well, there's a way to spend a Bank Holiday. Paul, you're a mug. Before I'd go in for that silly game, I'd break stones.

PAUL. Lucky we don't all think the same, Geoff.

GEOFFREY. Well, what's the good of it, anyway? Fat lot of good you're doing to yourself or any one else—I say it is a rotten way of enjoying yourself, and as far as the use you are to the country, it's not worth the price of the escaped convict fancy dress you're wearing.

PAUL. It isn't a question of enjoyment. Why should you always think of enjoyment?

GEOFFREY. Why shouldn't I? I work hard all day and every day in a stuffy old office—granted?

PAUL. Yes.

GEOFFREY. Very well, then, when I do get a holiday I think I've a right to spend it how I like—in amusement, to give me something to look forward to.

PAUL. So do I, and this is the way I choose to spend it.

GEOFFREY. Well, I call it a rotten way. Where does the fun come in?

PAUL. You wouldn't understand it if I told you. Have you read what Lord Roberts says?

GEOFFREY. Bobs—bless his heart—not much! I know what he's done, that's enough for me—you can have all he says. Whenever I see him I'll take my hat off to him, and I've cheered him many a time—cheered him till the men in front of me tore bits off their shirts to put in their ears. But, my word, they don't report him in the papers I patronize. They know better—got something more important to talk about. Don't you think I'm not proud of the old man, 'cos I am, and I like to hear what he's doing, but no speeches, thank you, Bobs; I'll take 'em as read.

PAUL. Well, he's not the only one. There's a lot of others who say the same.

GEOFFREY. Oh, I don't mind them. What's their record, anyway? What have they done? Are they covered with the blood of their country's enemies?

PAUL. Lots of them have done a lot for their country.

GEOFFREY. Oh, have they? Well, let them tell us how they spend their working-time. How many of them put in an eight hours' day on an office stool looking at a bit of blotting-paper, or staring out of a dirty window when the only thing you can see is a blooming advertisement of "Summer Tours to the Land of the Midnight Sun." Tell me that, before I listen to their gas about it being every Englishman's duty to give up all his spare time learning to defend his country. Let me know how they spend their work-time, and I'll—

PAUL. Well, we've got different points of view, that's all.

GEOFFREY. Well, yours is a rotten one right enough. What do you think, Mr. Brown?

BROWN. What is it, Geoffrey?

GEOFFREY. What do you think of this volunteering business? Don't you call it a mug's game?

BROWN. One moment, please. I do believe I've got the Jessop spin — ah, no! Volunteering? A mug's game? Well, perhaps the expression is too strong; but for myself, well, I fail to see the use of it, and I think there is danger in it.

PAUL. Surely, Mr. Brown, that oughtn't to deter any one.

BROWN. I was alluding to its moral danger.

GEOFFREY. Of course he was, Paul; he was thinking of the nurse-maids.

BROWN. I consider it has a tendency to convert the people of England to militarism—a condition of slavery which our country, up to now, has escaped, and I trust it always will.

PAUL. But do you call it slavery to defend your country? What about patriotism?

BROWN. There are other ways of showing patriotism, Paul.

GEOFFREY. I should think there were, indeed! You should have seen me on Mafeking night. I sang *Rule, Britannia!* on top of the fountain in Trafalgar Square—then fell into the water, and kissed the policeman who pulled me out.

ADA. My brother smashed a new hat Mafeking night, and he said he didn't care a —— bit.

BROWN. Exactly. I am thankful to say there is

no lack of patriotism. The heart of the nation is sound, as any foreign power will find to its cost who ventures to doubt it. As to defending the country—the country is in no danger of attack. The British fleet, we are assured, is strong enough to render invasion impossible, except from a raid, and if the raiders—well, er—raided, they would, I am sure, meet with a most uncomfortable reception.

PAUL. Who from, Mr. Brown?

BROWN. Who from? Why, from every man in the country, Paul. There is not an Englishman who wouldn't at once fly to arms, and not a man would escape to—er—

GEOFFREY. To tell the tale.

BROWN. Thank you, Geoffrey.

MAGGIE. How does one fly to arms, Dad?

BROWN. That, Maggie, is merely a figure of speech, meaning that every man would immediately seize a weapon and stand on the defensive.

MAGGIE. What weapon would you seize, Dad?

BROWN. That is a detail.

GEOFFREY. I always sleep with a brickbat under my pillow.

ADA. My brother has got one of those air pistols that fire darts into a target.

PAUL. Well, I think every one ought to learn dis-

cipline and how to use a rifle, and then he might be some good if he were wanted. Don't you agree with me, Maggie?

MAGGIE. I don't know, Paul; I'm afraid I've never thought of it. It is a pity that the uniform isn't more becoming.

PAUL. That's a woman all over! You see, the uniform isn't meant to attract.

[During scene between MAGGIE and PAUL, GEOFFREY, AMY, and ADA whisper together, and then leave the room quietly.]

MAGGIE. No, I suppose it's made to repel.

PAUL. Repel what?

MAGGIE. Why, the invader—I mean.

PAUL. Oh yes, of course.

MAGGIE. Still, the invader wouldn't see your back, would he, Paul?

PAUL. Rather not!

MAGGIE. Then there's no reason why it shouldn't fit a little better across the shoulders—is there?

PAUL. If I spent my afternoons at football matches, smoking cigarettes, and shouting myself hoarse, Maggie, would you think any better of me?

MAGGIE. Well, Paul, first, why should you suppose I think of you at all?

PAUL. The wish was father to the thought.

MAGGIE. Then you want me to think of you?

PAUL. Yes.

MAGGIE. Then I'll try hard.

PAUL. Yes, but I don't want it to be an effort—I want it to come naturally.

MAGGIE. Well, perhaps it will if—

PAUL. If what?

MAGGIE. If you have that coat taken in under the arms.

BROWN. I've got it—I've got it—I've go— . . . Damn!

SYD. Hello, who are those Johnnies on the lawn?

BROWN. What?

SYD. Can't you see them? Fellers on bicycles in uniform—look like Volunteers. Pals of Paul's, I expect.

BROWN. Let me see.

SYD. Making themselves at home all right, reading a newspaper or something.

BROWN. What infernal impudence! Hi—here, you, sir! Do you know you've no right there? This is private property you're on; that's a lawn you're trampling about—my lawn. Eh, what do you say? Just come here, sir. Come here, sir.

[Enter SOLDIER.]

SOLDIER. Your pardon, sir, we have made a mistake.

BROWN. You have, sir! You have no business here. This is a private ground you are on.

PAUL. Who are you?

SOLDIER. How are you, comrade? Will you please tell me the name?

BROWN. The name, young man, was on the gate, which was shut, and you ought to know the meaning of a shut gate. It means, sir, that you are not to open it. This is "Myrtle Villa."

PAUL. What Corps?

SOLDIER. How are you, comrade? Ah, then, you are Mr. Brown?

BROWN. Now you know my name, perhaps you'll kindly leave my property. I've no objections to you Volunteers amusing yourselves in your own way, but you mustn't do it at other people's expense. You render yourselves liable to be run in for trespass.

SOLDIER. Thornton Park is about three miles down the road that way—yes?

BROWN. Ah—about that, I believe.

SOLDIER. And the telegraph wire crosses the road and goes down by the end of the hill?

BROWN. I don't know, I'm sure. It's not working—what do you want with it?

SOLDIER. To destroy it.

BROWN. Destroy it? Ah yes; pretend to, you mean.

SOLDIER. Yes, of course, we pretend to.

BROWN. Well, silly nonsense, I call it.

SOLDIER. Thank you; that is all. Good-morning.

BROWN. Good-morning, young man, and take my advice and stick to the road. Remember an Englishman's house is his castle, and—er—so is his garden.

[Exit SOLDIER, laughing.]

SYD. Did you see that other fellow? It was old Oxo.

BROWN. Who?

SYD. Why, the man who used to be at Jenkins', the hair-dresser; cut my hair scores of times—used to put shillings on for me, too. He's joined the Volunteers. Is that your silly old corps, Paul?

PAUL. No, I don't think they were Volunteers; looked to me more like Regulars.

SYD. Oh, they wouldn't take old Oxo on as a regular soldier; besides, what would they be doing? There they go down the road to the left. Fog seems to be clearing.

PAUL. So I think it is. Well, I must be off and see if there's a chance of seeing the targets; perhaps

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those fellows are off there, too. Good-bye, Mr. Brown. Good-bye, Maggie.

[Enter GEOFFREY, AMY, and ADA.]

[Comic military ballet with song, *Soldiers of the Queen.* They march in to chorus. Two burlesque words of command by GEOFFREY, and then form tableau facing PAUL: GEOFFREY standing; AMY in attitude of defence in front of him, rifle at the charge; and ADA, with flag, in mock heroic attitude.]

GEOFFREY. Courage, my lads; steel your brave hearts; yonder stands the Invader. He has dared to scale the white cliffs of old England—you can see the marks of the cliffs on his face. Fear him not!

AMY. I see them, my noble leader, and they do not blanch my stout heart.

ADA. I see them, too. Pip! pip!

GEOFFREY. Fear him not—you are free men. What is he but a slave? He is here against his own judgment—he has been dragooned into that uniform by force.

AMY. But very little force would be required to let him drop out of it. I see the button that keeps it on.

ADA. Ha, ha! I see it, too! Pip! pip!

GEOFFREY. Under that richly laced coat beats the heart of a slinger of hash. But you cannot hear it beat—and why?

AMY. Because there is no hash.

GEOFFREY. Except the hash he has made of it.

ADA. I see the hash. Pip! pip!

GEOFFREY. Dry up, Ada, you haven't got a speaking part! But, my brave troops, we are not afraid. We are Englishmen, we are three to one, and we have the wind behind us. Charge!

ALL THREE. Hurrah! Prepare to receive your doom! Fix bayonets!

[GEOFFREY takes his bayonet, and tries to fix it on the rifle; doesn't know how.]

[When they enter, GEOFFREY has PAUL'S hat on, belt, and bayonet, wears the dining-room tablecloth, a red one, as a cloak, and a pair of gardening gloves; two huge rolls of paper as field-glasses. AMY, tea cosey on head, her skirt kilted, small shaggy hearthrug as sporran, and the rifle. ADA, long dressing-gown, large dish-cover as a shield, top hat

and feathers, and a stair-rod with a toy Union Jack on it.]

GEOFFREY. Prepare to receive your doom! Fix bayonets! It's broken, Paul, it won't stay on.

PAUL. Oh, do stop rotting.

[Goes for his hat.]

AMY. Only over my dead body, Paul.

[PAUL seizes his hat and exits.]

[GEOFFREY, AMY, and ADA, breathless, throw themselves into armchairs and laugh.]

REGGIE. Can you suggest anything for this telegram competition. Look here! A smart lady in the West End has ordered a new dress to go to an evening party in; on the afternoon of the party the dressmaker sends to say she can't have the new dress unless she pays for it. The lady hasn't got the money, but she can't go to the party without the dress. But her father is dying, and, she expects, will leave her some money in a day or two. Send a wire to the dressmaker, not more than twelve words, explaining the situation. Now!

GEOFFREY. "Father is rich,
Health isn't hearty,
Pay when he's dead—
Must go to party."

ADA. I don't think she ought to be going to a party if her father's dying.

AMY. You've hit the weak point of these competitions, Ada. I shouldn't wonder, if you sent up that remark, whether they wouldn't stop them as giving the public a false idea as to the callousness of the upper classes.

REGGIE. That's not bad, Geoff, but it doesn't seem to quite bring out all the details.

GEOFFREY. Oh, but a telegram never does—you have to read between the lines, you know. No telegram must be taken literally.

AMY. When Geoff wires to his bookmaker, "Five shillings the Hermit both ways," it doesn't mean that he backs him whether he goes backward or forward.

ADA. My mother got fifteen shillings for one of those competitions last month in the *Talk of the Tube*—consolation prize.

AMY. Yes; your mother wants that.

ADA. I thought hers was smarter than the one that got the first prize—lady from Sydenham. But father said mother's wasn't subtle enough.

REGGIE. Yes, that's it; you have to be jolly subtle.

ADA. Yes, that's what father says; but I don't quite see what it means.

GEOFFREY. Oh, I'll tell you. You've got to mean about a dozen different things, according to how you read it; and if you just read it straight off as it's written, it doesn't mean anything at all.

AMY. Well, you get that all right, as a rule, Reggie.

SYD. Now I think you might have a go with the small cone, Dad. Don't try too much; just feel the strain on the sticks; if you try and spin too fast, you'll spoil your style.

BROWN. Right you are, Syd. Just watch my elbows, will you—see they don't stick out too far.

SYD. That's not bad, Guv'nor—not at all bad. Hi, Geoffrey, look at that! That's not bad, is it, for the third lesson?

GEOFFREY. No, it isn't. Try and put a little more finger work into it, Mr. Brown.

ADA. My brother can run it up the stick.

AMY. My dear Ada, your brother ought to be running up a stick himself.

GEOFFREY. Grand slam to Amy.

MAGGIE. I say, you people, look!—it's getting much clearer.

AMY. My word, so it is! Geoff, do you think they'll play?

GEOFFREY. If they can see two hundred yards, they will; they'd never disappoint the public.

ADA. Oh, well, let's go—on the chance. How shall we go—train?

GEOFFREY. Well, trains are mighty uncertain these times.

AMY. Oh, don't let's run any risks; let's go on bicycles. It's only about twelve miles; do it in the hour.

SYD. Hardly. It's pretty thick still; take us every bit of an hour and a half.

ADA. Well, the match doesn't start till two. If we leave at half-past twelve—

GEOFFREY. No, that's no good; we want to be there by half-past twelve if we want to see anything. There'll be a big crowd, I can tell you.

AMY. Look here, I vote we start at once. Take our lunch, and eat it while we're waiting.

GEOFFREY. Good enough.

AMY. Maggie, dear, can we have sandwiches or something to take with us?

MAGGIE. Yes, Amy; how many? You four? You're going, Syd?

SYD. I should jolly well think so. Will you lend me your bike?

MAGGIE. Why, yes, dear, if you're careful with it. I'll go and see about your sandwiches. What would you like? There's some beef, tongue, ham—

GEOFFREY. Well, I think ham is bad for shouting —makes the lips greasy.

MAGGIE. Well, potted meat and some plum-pudding.

[Exit.]

GEOFFREY. Plum-pudding, indeed! And I don't care who wins the boat-race.

ADA. But that's not to-day, Geoff.

AMY. No wonder your hairpins fall out, Ada—your brain's got too much electricity in it.

BROWN. Well, I won't practise any more till this afternoon—might get stale.

AMY. Oh, Geoff, it ought to be a ripping game!

GEOFFREY. Well, it may be a near thing. Of course, if the Wanderers had had Sharkie Long playing, it would have been a walk-over.

ADA. But Simmonds 's nearly as good, who's taken his place.

AMY. No, no! he's not in the same class, Ada; he's awfully weak on his left—isn't he, Geoff?

GEOFFREY. Compared to Sharkie, he is still; but Simmonds has come on a lot this season, and he's got marvellous judgment. I don't know that any back, with the exception of Sammy Butterfield, and perhaps P. M. Lee, who places more—

ADA. I suppose E. C. Halliday is all right again?

AMY. He's all right and playing, and that sort of

thing; but he's not in condition, and that weakens the left very much. I don't suppose he'll ever be the man he was last year.

GEOFFREY. Perhaps not. Hard luck on him, isn't it? After only two seasons—don't think he's two-and-twenty yet.

[Enter MAGGIE.]

MAGGIE. It's all right about your sandwiches; they'll be ready in a few minutes.

[All cheer and laugh.]

Sh! Dad, there are a lot more of your Volunteer friends in the garden.

BROWN. What!

MAGGIE. I told them to go away, but they didn't seem to know what I meant; they're all round the house, in fact—on horses this time.

BROWN. *On horses in my garden!*

MAGGIE. Yes; in the drive, too. One of them rang the bell, and Jane went to answer it.

BROWN. This is too much! I rolled that drive yesterday! I'll go and give them a bit of my mind! It's perfectly shameful that these people shouldn't be told private property must be respected! How can they expect to get any sympathy when they—

[Enter CAPTAIN and LIEUTENANT RIAN HOBART.]

Please let me know the meaning of this intrusion, sir—or, rather, let me tell you the meaning of it! I call it disgraceful, sir—disgraceful!—that no notice is taken of shut gates! Private property is invaded—yes, invaded by you people in this way! I shall report it, sir, to the proper—proper people! And, moreover, I shall write to the papers, complaining that, as a citizen, I am not going to allow it! Kindly attempt no excuse, sir; I insist on having your name, and the name of your absurd Corps—now, sir!

PRINCE. I am Prince Yoland, Captain in the Black Dragoons of Her Imperial Majesty the Empress of the North!

END OF THE FIRST ACT

THE SECOND ACT

THE SECOND ACT

SAME scene. It is early next morning, about an hour before daybreak. Quite dark outside; gas alight.

The French windows are open. In the doorway stands an ORDERLY with his back to the stage, looking out. He is leaning against the window-post; his rifle leans against the wall inside. LIEUTENANT RIAN HOBART, tall, slim, fair, with mustache brushed up, lies asleep on the window-seat; he has taken one of the curtains down to use as a blanket, in addition to his greatcoat. His riding-boots, very muddy, are lying on a chair, and his sword, belts, and accoutrements are leaning against the piano. The round table has been drawn closer to the fire, the fancy tablecloth swept to one edge, pushing vases, photographs, etc., all into a bunch at one side; some of the articles are on the floor. On the bare part of the table is a camp coffee equipage, two cups, a paper of cheese, biscuits, and a sausage or two. CAPTAIN PRINCE YOLAND is sitting at the table, facing the audience, writing in military despatch-books. He has a file of messages in a clip on an elastic band by him, and is smoking a cigar. On his right at window sits a soldier with field-telephone and message-book. All the soldiers are very

muddy and travel-stained. A large fire is burning in the grate. The arm-chair is drawn up close in front of it, with a greatcoat and blanket on it, which have the appearance of having been slept in by the CAPTAIN. A kettle is on the fire; outside is heard at intervals the noise of horses, saddled up and picqueted, throwing up their heads. The general appearance of the room is disreputable.

TELEPHONE ORDERLY. Hullo; yes, this is headquarters, B. Squadron, Black Dragoons. [Pause.] Yes, I'm ready. To Officer commanding B. Squadron, Black Dragoons: Have you yet received report from Telbeg— How do you spell it? [Spelling it.] Stop! From Intelligence Officer 5th Cavalry Division.

[Crosses to CAPTAIN.]

CAPTAIN. No. I've heard nothing.

[ORDERLY returns.]

[A figure approaches the French windows from across the lawn.]

SUPER No. 1. Sergeant Thol!

[Enter SERGEANT THOL. Stout, grizzled old soldier, well set up, and very stiff and drilled in his manner. He marches up to a pace or two on right of CAPTAIN and salutes.]

CAPTAIN. Well?

SERGEANT THOL. Patrol just in, sir.

CAPTAIN. Your report?

SERGEANT THOL. Left him at midnight with six men; moved west along the railway to Billericay, then southwest as far as Thornton Park—not a sign of life anywhere; halted within a mile of Brentwood.

CAPTAIN. Yes, yes. Anything going on there?

SERGEANT THOL. Yes, Captain. The place seemed to be in an uproar; lights everywhere, and we could hear a lot of shouting from where we were.

CAPTAIN. Did you meet the man I told you of?

SERGEANT THOL. Yes, Captain. He arrived before we'd been there ten minutes. Came straight from the town. [Handing paper.] Here's his report, sir.

CAPTAIN [taking report and reading quickly through it]. Did he say anything?

SERGEANT THOL. Yes, Captain. He said he was going back to Brentwood, and would see how things went on, and he would get another report off, if anything more happened.

CAPTAIN. Did he say that it was safe for him to go back, then?

SERGEANT THOL. Yes, sir. He said that no one paid any attention to him, and he could go where

he chose. He said that every one was in the street singing songs.

CAPTAIN. Right! Anything more to report?

SERGEANT THOL. Yes, Captain. On the way back we were overtaken by two men on bicycles. We heard them coming. They ran right into us. They were scouts.

CAPTAIN. How did you know?

SERGEANT THOL. They were talking loudly to each other.

[CAPTAIN chuckles.]

CAPTAIN. Yes. Did they see you?

SERGEANT THOL. Yes, sir; and went back again fast. I couldn't have captured them without firing, and your orders were not to fire unless it was necessary.

CAPTAIN. Were they in uniform?

SERGEANT THOL. Yes, sir; in khaki.

CAPTAIN. How do you know?

SERGEANT THOL. Saw it by the light of their lamps, sir.

[CAPTAIN chuckles.]

CAPTAIN. Is that all?

SERGEANT THOL. Yes, sir. We cut all the wires along the line on our way back.

CAPTAIN. Very good! That will do.

SERGEANT THOL. Off saddle, sir?

CAPTAIN. No; just loosen girths, water, and feed.

SERGEANT THOL. Yes, sir.

[Salutes and exits.]

CAPTAIN [across to telephone, handing report to TELEPHONE ORDERLY]. Send this report to the Commandant.

TELEPHONE ORDERLY [picks up receiver]. Hullo! You can't telephone it, it's in cypher. Who's it from, sir?

[Looking at it.]

CAPTAIN. Lieutenant Telbeg, 7th Reserve Regiment. [Back to table. To himself—looks at notebook.] Now, who was he? [Ticks.] Ah, Telbeg, 7th Reserve Regiment, employed as head-waiter, Royal Hotel, Brentwood. Orderly! Sergeant Garth.

[Tick—chains.]

[CAPTAIN rises, goes across to window-seat, and touches LIEUTENANT RIAN HOBART on the shoulder, waking him up.]

Up you get, Rian. Things will be moving soon. Time you started. Some coffee for you on the table.

LIEUTENANT [jumps up, stretches, shakes his coat into position, puts his boots on]. Any news?

CAPTAIN [going in front of table to fireplace]. Nothing much.

LIEUTENANT. The old man been going for you again?

CAPTAIN. What do you mean?

LIEUTENANT. Why, the lord of this castle.

CAPTAIN. No, thank goodness; talked himself out yesterday, I should hope. Rude old man, wasn't he?

LIEUTENANT [crossing and pouring out coffee]. Well, I suppose he was, judging by his manner. I don't profess to understand English enough to make out all the kind things he said about you.

CAPTAIN. Thought I should have to tie him up at one time, but his family got him out of the room just before my patience was exhausted.

[Enter SERGEANT GARTH.]

SERGEANT GARTH [salutes]. You want me, sir?

CAPTAIN. Horses all fed?

SERGEANT GARTH. Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN. Men had their breakfasts?

SERGEANT GARTH. Yes, sir. Got all they could. There wasn't much about.

CAPTAIN. Be ready to move at five minutes' notice.

SERGEANT GARTH. Yes, sir.

[Salutes and exits.]

LIEUTENANT [drinking coffee]. I see this report says that some Volunteers, or something, would probably leave Brentwood soon after this was sent.

CAPTAIN. Yes, our patrols should be in touch with them by now.

LIEUTENANT. We got any out?

CAPTAIN. No; ours are in. Second Squadron finding some, though.

LIEUTENANT. Shall we hold on here at all?

CAPTAIN. No; probably not, I should say. Got orders to be ready to fall back—northeast on to right of Second Corps.

LIEUTENANT. Seems we're giving up rather a good position.

[To right of piano, putting on sword, etc.]

CAPTAIN. Wouldn't take long to regain it, if wanted. They can't bring anything big as far east as this for many hours.

LIEUTENANT. Brentwood's a garrison town, isn't it?

CAPTAIN. Yes—no; there are barracks at Warley. Only one weak battalion, though, going abroad; two-thirds of 'em on furlough. Are you ready?

LIEUTENANT. Yes, I ordered my horse to be kept saddled. Is my party ready?

CAPTAIN. Yes. Warned 'em half an hour ago—ten men and a corporal. You know what to do?

LIEUTENANT [putting on helmet]. Yes, perfectly!

CAPTAIN. We sha'n't be here much longer. When

you retire, you know the line we've taken, and where to find us. Off you go! Don't spare your horses.

LIEUTENANT [puts coat over the left arm and draws himself up, clicks heels, salutes]. Very good, sir.

[Exits by French window.]

[ORDERLY salutes as he goes out.]

CAPTAIN [going toward TELEPHONE ORDERLY]. That gone through?

No. 1 ORDERLY. Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN. Any answer?

ORDERLY. Only acknowledgment, sir.

[Horses trotting.]

[Enter GEOFFREY under guard of a soldier—No. 2 SUPER. He has the look of having slept in his clothes.]

CAPTAIN. What is it? What do you want? Oh yes, I know—you wanted to see me. Well? I'm afraid you've had a bad night.

GEOFFREY. Yes, I have. Now, look here, mister, what's the game?

CAPTAIN. I don't quite understand you. Have you any complaint to make?

GEOFFREY. Have I any complaint to make? Not much—oh, no! I like that—why, I've got a cart-load!

CAPTAIN. Well?

GEOFFREY. Do you know that ever since you came yesterday I've been in the scullery?

CAPTAIN. Yes.

GEOFFREY. With two of your muddy idiots of men sitting there, too!

CAPTAIN. Ah! company for you!

GEOFFREY. Company! I'd get more company out of a dead rat. No matter what I said to them, they just sat there and grunted—like stuck pigs.

CAPTAIN. They don't understand English, perhaps.

GEOFFREY. They don't; and lucky for them, I can tell you, if they're touchy about their personal appearance. That wasn't so bad; but if I started out to leave them to themselves, they just stood in front of me, and made noises like a gramophone that can't grip the record—and there I was kept.

CAPTAIN [to chair]. It was by my orders.

GEOFFREY. Oh, was it? Well, what I want to know is, what right you had to give those orders? I don't know what you're doing here and I don't care, but don't you imagine we're the Girls of Gottenberg here. And if you're looking for a six-round contest with the British Army, you're welcome, but don't mix us up in it. I'm a private citizen, and you've no right to interfere with me!

CAPTAIN. When I came, yesterday, you had a rifle in your hand.

GEOFFREY. Well, what of that? Perhaps I'd been having a pot at the grouse.

CAPTAIN. Ah, there are grouse here? Plentiful, eh?

GEOFFREY. You'd hardly believe me—can't get to sleep sometimes for the noise they make chirruping.

CAPTAIN. One does not usually shoot grouse with a rifle—a military rifle.

GEOFFREY. Ah, perhaps not where you come from —we have to keep 'em down best way we can. Some use poison. I prefer a rifle myself, it's more sporting.

CAPTAIN. You're a humorist, Mr. Smith.

GEOFFREY. Hope you haven't broken anything finding that out.

[Meets TELEPHONE ORDERLY, who hands a message to CAPTAIN, who reads it, writes an answer, while he goes on talking to GEOFFREY.]

CAPTAIN. Are you a Volunteer?

GEOFFREY. Not much—I'm not! I tell you I'm a harmless citizen—a looker-on, one of the crowd. And I want to get away from here and get a good seat for the circus.

CAPTAIN. As one of the crowd, you'd no right to have a rifle.

GEOFFREY. Oh, chuck the rifle! I tell you, it wasn't mine. I shouldn't know how to make the thing go off. I wish I did; I might have sent you to bed for a week or two.

CAPTAIN. What was it doing here?

GEOFFREY. It was left 'ere by a pal of mine. He's a fire-eater, one of the old Guard. Lucky for you he wasn't here when you came.

CAPTAIN. Where is he?

GEOFFREY How should I know? He's gone, and I want to go too. I tell you, I'm quite harmless. If the British Army returns this visit of ceremony, they'll play the game. They won't be bullying a lot of harmless men in your country.

CAPTAIN [dryly]. Perhaps not. But then, you see, where I come from none of the men are harmless. Now, where do you want to go?

[GEOFFREY sits.]

GEOFFREY. What's that matter? I tell you, I'm fed up with the scullery. [Rises suddenly.] I want to go somewhere where I can talk to some one who'll appreciate me.

[Flask business.]

[TELEPHONE ORDERLY takes message.]

CAPTAIN. Well, I'm really sorry I had to incon-

venience you—for a bit. It won't be for much longer now. We shall be leaving here immediately, and then you can go—where you like. [Puts on coat.] In the mean time, if you've exhausted the pleasures of the scullery, you can stay here if you like. I don't suppose you're dangerous, eh?

[Back to centre.]

GEOFFREY [crosses]. I sha'n't go off, if that's what you mean.

CAPTAIN. Orderly! Sergeant Garth.

[No. 1 ORDERLY salutes and exits.]

GEOFFREY. I'm sure I hope you've been pretty comfortable here.

[CAPTAIN puts on sword, left of piano.]

CAPTAIN. Quite, thanks; felt quite as if we were at home.

GEOFFREY. Yes, I see; made the place look like it too—I don't think. D'you mind if I smoke? I'll try and not let the ash fall on the carpet.

CAPTAIN. Ha! ha!

[Enter SERGEANT GARTH. Salutes.]

SERGEANT GARTH. You wish to see me, sir?

CAPTAIN. We march at once. Any men out?

SERGEANT GARTH. Only those with the Lieutenant.

CAPTAIN. Very good. Mount, and send my man for my kit.

SERGEANT GARTH. Yes, sir.

[Salutes—going.]

CAPTAIN. Wait, Sergeant. Any compensation to pay these people?

SERGEANT GARTH. You mean for damage, sir?

CAPTAIN. Yes. Anything broken, destroyed?

SERGEANT GARTH. No, sir, nothing of any consequence.

CAPTAIN. Here you, he says nothing has been broken of any consequence.

[To GEOFFREY.]

GEOFFREY. My word! You should see the kitchen!

CAPTAIN [to SERGEANT]. What's wrong with the kitchen?

SERGEANT GARTH. Nothing that I could see. Had to use it, sir—no fires allowed outside.

CAPTAIN. Bit dirty, I expect. You can wash up later. [To GEOFFREY.] We don't compensate for dirt.

GEOFFREY. No, you wouldn't! Jolly kind of you not to expect us to buy it off you. Still, I suppose you won't miss it. You're generous, though—the smell's worth eightpence a cubic foot!

CAPTAIN. Any stores taken?

SERGEANT GARTH. There wasn't much, sir. But. . . .

CAPTAIN. But you took what there was. All right, what's your estimate?

[SERGEANT GARTH hands paper. CAPTAIN reads.]

CAPTAIN. Yes, that makes in English money about thirty shillings—say, twenty-five shillings.

GEOFFREY. Store prices?

CAPTAIN. Yes, with discount for cash. That will do, Sergeant. Orderly?

[ORDERLY—No. 2 SUPER—turns and salutes.]

Tell the owner of this house to come here.

GEOFFREY. Ugh! What's that?

[Exit ORDERLY.]

CAPTAIN. I have sent for the proprietor of the house.

GEOFFREY. What do you want him for?

[CAPTAIN dismisses TELEPHONE ORDERLY. Enter man to collect CAPTAIN's kit.]

CAPTAIN. Compensate him—for food and fuel. That's our rule—treat the public well.

GEOFFREY. Yes, but this isn't a public. I'd rather you did it than me—he's touchy.

CAPTAIN. That's his lookout—he needn't take it.

GEOFFREY. Well, you heard him yesterday for a bit, before you cleared the court. That wasn't bad, I thought, for an impromptu after-breakfast effort, was it? But I bet it's baby talk to what he's got to unload after a night in his room thinking it out.

CAPTAIN. I'm getting used to that sort of thing. It does no good. I prefer your way of taking it—you're a philosopher!

GEOFFREY. What's that?

CAPTAIN. Any one who makes the best of a very bad case.

GEOFFREY. Perhaps you're right. I'm a house-agent by profession.

CAPTAIN. Ha! ha!

[Enter MAGGIE.]

MAGGIE. You want to see my father—you sent for him?

CAPTAIN. Your pardon—er—lady. Yes, I want to see your *father*.

MAGGIE. Yes. The man brought me the message, and I have come.

CAPTAIN. But I would prefer to see your father.

MAGGIE. Please let me do instead! My father is —isn't able! He cannot understand . . .

CAPTAIN. Not understand?

MAGGIE. He does not realize the situation. He is naturally very much upset.

GEOFFREY. Don't you understand? I told you what it would be! His steam-pressure's reached the limit, and the sight of you will about bust the boiler.

MAGGIE. Please tell me?

CAPTAIN. I would rather have explained to your —to a man. My men have used—have taken food and fuel. For what they have taken I wish to pay.

MAGGIE. There wasn't much.

CAPTAIN. Perhaps not, but they took something.

GEOFFREY. They took all there jolly well was, and there's nothing left for the people in the house, and we mayn't go out and get any more—so there!

CAPTAIN [to MAGGIE]. I hope the men were not rough?

MAGGIE. They were not gentle.

GEOFFREY. You bet! They don't look like sick-nurses, any of 'em!

CAPTAIN. What would you? They are soldiers—hungry soldiers, and they must have food.

GEOFFREY. Ho! Don't you be anxious about 'em, Guv'nor!

MAGGIE. I understand.

CAPTAIN. War is not gentle, and we are making war.

GEOFFREY. Yes, but we're not; that's what I complain of!

MAGGIE. War is made by soldiers on soldiers. We are all helpless here. We can do nothing.

GEOFFREY. No, that's what I say—we're spectators. Leave us alone to look on.

CAPTAIN. Well, then, you must pay for your seat.

GEOFFREY. Perhaps, but not for your refreshments.

CAPTAIN. I do not require you to. Here is your payment.

[Gives order form.]

[Enter SERGEANT GARTH and exit.]

SERGEANT GARTH. All ready, sir.

CAPTAIN. Right. I am sorry, lady, that even so small an instance of the realities of war has come to your notice. And I am sorrier that my duty has made me responsible for it. You are now at liberty to go where you please. Mr. Smith, you can now wash up.

[Clicks his heels, salutes, and exits.]

[Outside some words of command: "Prepare to mount! Mount! Half-section! Right! Walk! March!

Trot!" MAGGIE goes to the window and looks out. It is now daylight, and the fog is clearer; and as the scene goes on, the light outside gets brighter, but is never quite clear, occasional clouds of fog coming on. No one turns the gas out in the room, and the gas-lights look pale and give the room a still more dissipated look.]

GEOFFREY. So I'm a philosopher, am I? A man who makes the best of things—puts a good face on 'em! Well, my friend, I'd like to put a good face on you—when you were looking the other way! I'd—

[Enter AMY followed by ADA, the former looking bright and jolly; but ADA's hair is a mop, and she looks a bit bedraggled.]

AMY. Well, Geoff—frightened them away?

GEOFFREY. Hullo, Amy!

ADA. Have they gone—really gone? Will they come back?

GEOFFREY. I dunno, Ada. If you go and wave your handkerchief out of the turret, perhaps they will. But don't count on it! Where's the Guv'nor?

AMY. Oh, Geoff, wasn't Dad funny? I thought I should burst!

ADA. Mr. Brown has gone to find a policeman.

GEOFFREY. What's the good of that?

AMY. Oh, Dad's just wild! I've never seen him like this before. He says it's a practical joke!

GEOFFREY. Does he? Well, now, I wonder!

ADA. What do you wonder?

GEOFFREY. I was wondering—

ADA. Yes?

GEOFFREY. What your brother would think of it.

ADA. I expect he'd have known what to make of it. He's smart, I can tell you.

AMY. I think he was rather nice-looking.

GEOFFREY. Who?

AMY. Did you hear him say he was a prince, Geoff?

GEOFFREY. Couldn't say! He's not like the princes I've met.

ADA [picking up half a sausage]. What's this?

GEOFFREY. His Royal Highness' breakfast. And that reminds me: Maggie says the larder's bare, but we might find something to cheer us up. Anyway, I'm going to look. Come along, Amy.

[Exits.]

AMY. There's some cheese and biscuits up in my

room. Jane brought 'em up last night. Coming, Ada?

[AMY and ADA exit.]

[PAUL appears at the French window. He is muddy from head to foot, and dead white from fatigue, hunger, etc. MAGGIE starts back from the window as he comes in. He goes past her, and sinks on to window-seat without speaking.]

MAGGIE. Paul! Oh, Paul, what's the matter? What does it all mean?

PAUL [quiet, tired voice]. Don't you know—what it means?

MAGGIE. Yes, yes; of course I know what it means—that is, I think I do! But how—how did they do it, Paul?

PAUL. What's happened here?

MAGGIE. They came yesterday. They didn't do anything. They were here—and—we didn't do anything. We didn't see—we never went out. He wouldn't let us go out. We were all kept in our rooms—they said it would be dangerous for us.

PAUL. And then they went away?

MAGGIE. Yes, they went away—now—just this moment. And, Paul, where have they gone to?

They did nothing—and will they come back? They said they were coming back! I couldn't understand all they said. Why, what are they doing? What does it all mean—what will they do—tell me?

[During this speech MAGGIE has got a little more excited, and finishes it down by PAUL, with her hand beating on his shoulder as he sits on window-seat with his head buried in his hands.]

PAUL. They are coming back; yes, they will come back!

MAGGIE. Why, why? And where have they gone to?

PAUL. I don't know. They came here yesterday, and I saw them. I saw them after I left you—two or three of them—and I heard them talking, and couldn't understand what they said. And I didn't know what they could be, and I followed them in the fog. And they met some more—and then I met some more. They were all alike—and then they were everywhere. I turned up lots of roads—and there they were, everywhere. Sometimes they shouted at me, but no one stopped me. And I went on to Brentwood, and the fog got thicker, and when I got there it was quite dark! I found they knew it—

every one there knew it. Not much—not any details; but they knew they'd landed and were coming. Every one was rushing about, talking and shouting, and I rode about to find some one—some one to tell what I had seen—some one who would do something. They were all rushing about talking and shouting, and I couldn't find any one to tell me what to do and where to go, and I went backward and forward —here and there. I was tired, but I couldn't stop! Then I rode out again along the roads to see what was happening, and then back—I went backward and forward, backward and forward—

MAGGIE. Yes, Paul, yes?

PAUL. Then they shouted that all the Volunteers were to go to the Town Hall and assemble there, and I went and waited and waited, and more came, but no one to tell us anything, and I couldn't wait any longer and do nothing, and I went away again. And then I went back, and there were more there and more coming. And we waited—oh, for hours, and heaps of people were there, singing and shouting, and giving us drink. But no one to give us any orders. Every one was ordering different things at the same time, and we fell in and then broke off and went away again, and back again—and at last some officers came out of the Town Hall, and one of them

—I don't know who he was—came over to us and began talking, and we were told to wait till the ammunition was served out.

MAGGIE. Yes!

PAUL. And he said he wanted some on bicycles to go out and reconnoitre, and I had a bicycle and started out with another man. And we went off in the fog—it was very dark, and we came on some of them on the road, and they shouted to us, but I rode away, and then I didn't know where the other man was, and I waited under a hedge, but didn't see them again. And then I rode on here. I was told to come—somewhere about here, and I was to report—but I don't know where or who to, and there's nothing to report, except that they've gone away from here, and I don't know where they've gone to. And I ought to go after them, I suppose, but I can't go on any farther. I'm fairly done up, I am. I can't go on any more, and I don't know anything—nobody knows anything—nobody!

[During this speech, which he begins quietly, PAUL works himself up to an excited state and walks about. Then from fatigue gets hysterical, and finally sits at the table and sobs.]

[Toward the end of the speech GEOFFREY comes in. He carries some drink—say, half a bottle of whiskey and some soda-water. He stands and listens to PAUL.]

MAGGIE. Paul, don't! Oh, don't!

PAUL. They can only shout and sing.

MAGGIE. There, dear, there! It's all right, and they've gone away, and you must rest—you're so tired.

GEOFFREY. I say, Paul, old man, just you sit still and don't worry about it.

MAGGIE. Yes, and you must have something to eat—if we can find it. And oh, how wet and dirty your things are! You must take them all off and put on some of Reggie's.

GEOFFREY [handing him some whiskey]. There, old chap! This is what you're looking for, isn't it? Now then, buck up, and don't think any more about it.

[Sits.]

MAGGIE. Yes, Paul, don't think about it any more. What does it matter—to us? We'll soon clean the house up again.

GEOFFREY. Of course we will, and will have a high old time. I expect we shall see some fun, but

it ain't our job, old fellow. Oh, it'll be great—shouldn't wonder if it doesn't mean a few days off at the office! Have another?

[Enter AMY and ADA with some odds and ends of food.]

AMY. I say, Geoff, this is great! Why, there's Paul! Oh, Paul, you do look a sight! What have you been doing?

GEOFFREY. There, don't you notice him, Amy; he's been making a night of it—a fair old ricketty-racketty, and he's just dropped in for a pick-me-up.

AMY. And he must have wanted picking up lots of times. Thought you were a real soldier, eh, Paul? Now, Geoff, here's a picnic, and it won't go far among the lot. Luckily, Paul won't have much of an appetite. Syd's gone out to try and get some sardines or something. We must boil the kettle in here. Why, bless me, the window's open—and, I say, Geoffrey, the fog's cleared, and it's going to be a decent day.

GEOFFREY. Good egg! Come along, bustle up, and we'll have a day out somehow. Now then, Paul, get away and find some decent togs—something not quite so conspicuous, and we'll have a rare old beano.

PAUL [standing up]. Are you all mad? Don't

any of you understand? How can you stand here and laugh and joke in the same rotten old way? Why, can't you understand what's happened—not even you, Maggie? You can all talk, and say it's nothing to do with us, that it's not our business, and that you can just stay here and amuse yourselves, and that everything is going on in the same old way, and all you can think of it is that you'll get a few days more away from the office! Don't you realize it yet—that the whole damned country is coming down like a house of cards, and that you, and thousands like you, are saying it's not your business, and as long as it doesn't interfere with you, let it go on? And others are just the same, shouting and singing rotten music-hall songs, and thinking they're just going to see some fun! Fun—oh, my God!

AMY. What's the matter with you, Paul?

GEOFFREY. What ho, old man! All right, Amy, of course it's the whiskey on an empty stomach.

ADA. Really, Paul, I think you forget where you are.

[Noise and shouting heard on all sides by men outside and inside the house, such as, "This way!" "Where are you going to?" "Here's the place!" "Which is the way in?"

"Where's the door?" "Where's the owner?" "Are we downhearted?" and an occasional laugh.]

MAGGIE. They've come back!

GEOFFREY. No; that's English!

[Enter quickly at French windows two VOLUNTEERS, followed by a CAPTAIN FINCH, and two more men by door, shown left. The VOLUNTEERS are mostly dressed in uniform, one or two of them incomplete, some in service dress, some in dress uniform. They are all more or less excited, and during the whole Volunteer scene the impression of lack of discipline is apparent. Every one shows keenness, but it is occasionally misdirected, and sometimes they allow their attention to wander from the business in hand; for example, some of them study the photographs; one might take up the diabolo sticks, and try a spin; and altogether, while all show that they are full of fight, no idea of the serious side of the business in hand

seems to strike some of them. CAPTAIN FINCH is very excited, fussy, nervously important, not being quite sure of himself and his powers of command. His uniform is very correct. He has sword, whistle, haversack, glasses, compass, revolver, etc. Rather stout, lacking in dignity, and has a beard. He has every possible thing on.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. Are you the owner of this house? Where is he? I want to see him.

MAGGIE. My father is out.

[PAUL is now quiet again, and recovered. He salutes.]

CAPTAIN FINCH [to PAUL]. Who are you? What are you doing here? Hang it! Where's the Color Sergeant? Where's Mr. Jackson?

[Back to window.]

[One or two VOLUNTEERS rush in at doors, and rush out again, excited and confused. A CORPORAL is at garden door, talking heatedly, endeavoring to gain some sort of order with expressions such as, "What are you standing here for?" "Get away

and fall in outside." "Come along!" Outside a voice is heard on the lawn, saying, "Now, fall in there—fall in number!" "As you were." "Left dress." "Where's the rest of the Company?" "Stop talking, I say!" "Will you stop talking," etc.]

[CAPTAIN FINCH back.]

PAUL. I'm a scout, sir.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Scout—what for? What are you doing here? What have you seen? What are your orders?

[Enter VOLUNTEERS.]

PAUL. I was sent along the road to see—

CAPTAIN FINCH. Yes, yes—what road?

PAUL. The road from Brentwood.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Oh, never mind what damned road you went along! Have you seen anything? Where are the enemy? Surely you've got eyes in your head?

[VOLUNTEERS in the room are sitting down. Some have lit cigarettes, some looking at photographs, and showing curiosity in the music, books, etc.]

PAUL. Yes, sir; I saw several of the enemy—scouting parties, I think!

[VOLUNTEERS at piano. One-finger playing. Three at window, talking.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. Yes, yes. Where? Oh, will you stop that noise? How can I hear what this man is saying if you make a row like that? Yes; now tell me, where did you see them?

PAUL. On the road, sir.

CAPTAIN FINCH. My good man, you've said that before! Which road?

PAUL. Between here and Brentwood.

CAPTAIN FINCH. What's the good of telling me that? That's the road we've come along. Where the hell is that Color Sergeant?

[Exit PAUL, to find COLOR SERGEANT.]

Can't any of you men find him, instead of—?

[Enter Mr. JACKSON, the lieutenant. Tall, thin, very young boy in uniform.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. Well, Mr. Jackson, and where have you been?

[GEOFFREY to fender.]

JACKSON. Oh, we lost the way.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Lost the way?

[MAGGIE to back of AMY'S chair.]

JACKSON. Yes, we followed B Company into

the house over the way—didn't know where you'd gone to.

CAPTAIN FINCH. If you'd been in your proper place, you'd have seen which way I came. I can't be everywhere, and tell every single man where he is to go! Have you seen the Color Sergeant?

JACKSON. No, sir, he wasn't with me.

CAPTAIN FINCH. And where are your men?

JACKSON. I've lost some of them, but I've got about twenty outside, waiting.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Well, for goodness' sake, don't stand talking here, but get to work!

JACKSON. Very good, sir; but what do you want me to do?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Oh, God! You know as well as I do what we've got to do! We're to hold on here, and here's what you've got to do!

[Feeling in pockets.]

JACKSON. Here! [To MEN.] Fall in outside there, d'ye hear?

[VOLUNTEERS exit.]

[Enter COLOR SERGEANT at window. Stout old soldier—Regular.]

COLOR SERGEANT. You want me, sir?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Want you? Of course I do! Where on earth have you been hiding yourself?

COLOR SERGEANT. I've been outside, sir, getting the men together. They are all over the place.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Well, you'd no business to let 'em get all over the place! Have you got them all together, now?

COLOR SERGEANT. Pretty well, sir. There are some stragglers to come in yet.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Oh, damn! Never mind, we can't wait for them now—we must get a move on. Now, here's what we've got to do!

[Feels in pockets again.]

[Enter CORPORAL through window —No. 5 SUPER.]

CORPORAL. Is the Captain here?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Well, what is it?

CORPORAL. Please, sir, there's a man taken very bad.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Taken bad? What do you mean? What's the matter with him?

CORPORAL. I don't know, sir. He's feeling sick.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Oh, well, ah—hang it all, I can't do anything! What do you come to me for?

CORPORAL. I don't know what to do with him, sir.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Oh, let him lie down.

CORPORAL. He is lying down, sir. He can't get up.

GEOFFREY. Sit on his head.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Yes—no. Well, carry him in here. No, take him into the kitchen.

GEOFFREY [with meaning]. Kitchen! He won't lie down there.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Do something—do anything, only don't bother me!

[Exit CORPORAL.]

[COLOR SERGEANT moves up to window.]

I've got too much to do! Now, Color Sergeant, where are you going?

COLOR SERGEANT. I thought I'd better see after him, sir.

CAPTAIN FINCH. You just stop here while I tell you what to do. Now, this is our post—our position—you understand?

COLOR SERGEANT [comes back.] Yes, sir. We stop here.

[Two VOLUNTEERS at window.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. And we're to take up this position. Where the devil is my note-book? [Crosses to table; searches pockets and haversack, produces from latter a flask, gloves, bottle of soda-water, large

packet of sandwiches, map, etc., and finally notebook.] Now, pay attention!

[The COLOR SERGEANT has gone to the door to say something to an excited VOLUNTEER at window.]

Color Sergeant, will you come here and listen to me?

COLOR SERGEANT. Right, sir.

[To VOLUNTEERS.]

Take his boots off and pour some water over him.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Now, here it is. Here are the orders! [Sits; reads.] "The enemy's men are somewhere about—about"—oh, well, never mind.

[Enter VOLUNTEER at door—No. 6 SUPER.]

VOLUNTEER. Mr. Jackson!

CAPTAIN FINCH. Yes; what do you want with him?

VOLUNTEER. Please, sir, what are the men outside to do?

JACKSON. Wait for me. I'll come out in a minute.

VOLUNTEER. Well, sir, they all seem rather tired of waiting. Some of them are going away to see what's happening.

JACKSON. Look here, I'll go out to them in a minute.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Just go back and tell them Mr. Jackson will be out in a minute.

[Exit VOLUNTEER.]

[Reads]. "The force under Colonel Trollope will advance Wickham and occupy it." There was a lot more which I didn't get down. There—um—um—something else. Oh, see, here it is! "Three Companies 3 V.B.E. will be on the extreme left of the town." There, you see—that's us. This is the extreme left, and this Company has got to hold on to this house. Do you understand, Jackson?

JACKSON. Yes.

COLOR SERGEANT. Hold on to the house, sir? Yes, sir, make a defensive position of it, sir.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Of course, I've got that written down. [Reads.] "Each Company will strengthen its own position, and buildings and walls, etc., to be put in a state of defence."

JACKSON. Yes, I see. What shall I do to them?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Do? Why, God bless my soul, you know — you — er—you —why, you make defences.

COLOR SERGEANT. May I suggest, sir?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Well, what is it?

COLOR SERGEANT. That Lieutenant Jackson take the upper story with his men, sir; that you, sir, take

the ground floor; and I will take the outside of the house, the garden, sir, with No. 4 Section.

CAPTAIN FINCH. That's a very good suggestion, Color Sergeant! Now, you understand that, Jackson? Take your men up-stairs, and put the top story to a state of defence!

JACKSON [going]. Yes, I see. [Stops.] Shall I put all the furniture against the door—that sort of thing?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Yes, yes! You know! The usual thing. It's all in the book. You tell him, Color Sergeant.

COLOR SERGEANT [like a parrot]. "Knock out all glass from windows, blind windows with mattresses, bales, carpets—make loopholes four feet six inches from ground line, arrange for supply of water for garrison, and earth for putting out fires."

CAPTAIN FINCH. There, then, you know it all. Get along, for goodness' sake, and get something done!

[Exit Mr. JACKSON, looking doubtful of his powers.]

[Enter PAUL, window.]

Now, Color Sergeant, send me some men.

COLOR SERGEANT. Yes, sir—how many, sir?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Oh, a Section! Well, perhaps twelve will do—or ten. No—say half a dozen!

COLOR SERGEANT. Half a dozen! Very good, sir.

[Going.]

CAPTAIN FINCH [rises]. Oh, and Color Sergeant?

COLOR SERGEANT. Yes, sir?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Come back here the moment you've told your men what to do—see?

COLOR SERGEANT. Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN FINCH. I'm not going to have you sloping off again!

[Exit COLOR SERGEANT.]

PAUL [comes down]. What shall I do, sir?

CAPTAIN FINCH. You—what are you? Why are you here?

[Enter JACKSON.]

JACKSON. How many men shall I put in each room?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Oh, only a few.

[Enter six VOLUNTEERS at garden door.]

JACKSON. A few? What do you mean by a few?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Why, two or three.

[Up stage, back to audience.]

JACKSON. All right.

[Exit.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. Now then, you men, just put this room in a state of defence.

[JACKSON re-enters.]

JACKSON. I say, would you put two *or* three—

CAPTAIN FINCH. Oh, hell! Why, put two in small rooms and three in the large rooms.

[Exit JACKSON.]

[Double cross. FINCH up stage; PAUL down stage.]

[To men in room.] Now, look here, first thing you've got to do is—

[Enter COLOR SERGEANT.]

COLOR SERGEANT. Please, sir, which is our front?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Our front?

COLOR SERGEANT. Yes, sir; which is the direction of the enemy?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Why, surely you know that? We've to face east—that is, why [doubtfully pointing in a half-circle], over there. [To PAUL.] Here, you know where the enemy are, don't you?

PAUL. No, sir; not now. They were here less than an hour ago.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Here less than an hour ago? Why the blazes didn't you tell me that before? They can't be far off, and here you all stand doing nothing. Where are they now, eh? Which way did they go?

PAUL. I don't know.

CAPTAIN FINCH. You don't know! You saw them here, and don't know which way they went?

MAGGIE. They went off, and started along the road to—

CAPTAIN FINCH. Yes, yes?

MAGGIE. They went away trotting, and seemed in a hurry.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Which direction?

MAGGIE. Over there. [Points.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. Of course. There, that is the direction of the enemy. That's your front—see, Color Sergeant—that!

[Makes a sweep with his arm.]

COLOR SERGEANT. I see, sir—with the flank thrown back?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Of course with the flank thrown back! Exactly, with the tank thrown flat—the tank blown—oh, damn!

COLOR SERGEANT. Very good, sir.

[Exit.]

[At this moment considerable noise heard off, upstairs. Noise of breaking glass falling and furniture being moved about, mingled with angry shouts of expostulation.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. And look here, Color Sergeant,

look sharp about coming back. I shall want you. [To his men.] Now, you men, why the blazes don't you set to work?

[PAUL exits with two men.]

VOLUNTEER. Yes, sir; what shall we do?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Get all the furniture piled up this side of the room.

[Two VOLUNTEERS move piano down to window. Two VOLUNTEERS move sofa up to window-seat.]

[To GEOFFREY.] I must ask you and these ladies to leave the room. You will be in the way, and will be very—er—uncomfortable here.

AMY. Nonsense; it's our house!

GEOFFREY. That's all rot, you know. We shall be just as comfortable here as in any other part of the castle, as far as I can see. Even the eastern turret seems a bit upset, and, mark you, I'm not going back to the dungeon—I should say, the scullery! We want to see all the fun, and there'll be some in a minute.

ADA. I hope you'll put all this furniture back in its position!

CAPTAIN FINCH. Now, some of you others, don't stand gaping there! Just push the glass out of the windows.

VOLUNTEER. What with, sir?

ANOTHER VOLUNTEER. That's easy work.

[Bang the butts of their rifles through the window.]

[Others do the same, and then the others set to work, some moving the piano, table, etc., over toward window-seat. Enter PAUL and TWO VOLUNTEERS with mattresses. Shouts outside from Mr. BROWN.]

BROWN [outside, shouts]. Where is he? Who's responsible for this tomfoolery?

[Enter Mr. BROWN, just purple and spitting with rage in the middle of the room.]

[Yells]. Stop!

[For an instant everybody stops, and while he goes on speaking gradually go on with their work.]

Who is responsible for this? Who is the leader of this—this band?

CAPTAIN FINCH. I command here.

BROWN. You? Who are you? You burglar!

CAPTAIN FINCH. I am Captain Finch.

BROWN. What right have you got to come into a

private house and destroy it? What right have you got to come in at all?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Those were my orders.

BROWN. Orders? You—orders in my house! Is this a mad-house broken loose? Stop all this at once, sir, put the furniture back in its place, and leave the house!

CAPTAIN FINCH. But—my orders?

BROWN. Those are *my* orders—the orders of the only man who has any right to give them in this house.

CAPTAIN FINCH. But I must defend the house.

BROWN. Nonsense, sir! Stop your men at once, do you hear? And put the things where you found them! If you must play this absurd and foolish game, go outside and do it in the middle of the road! Why, hang it, sir, you're as bad as those masquerading ruffians who were here last night!

CAPTAIN FINCH. God bless my soul, but those are the enemy!

BROWN. Then, sir, why the devil don't you go after them, instead of—instead of—housebreaking here? Once for all, I won't have it, and out you go! And if you've come here to find those scoundrels who invaded my privacy last night—

[PAUL crosses from top window to bottom.]

—talking some incomprehensible language, and not understanding the plain English I gave them—if you're looking for them—in the name of common-sense, go and look for them where they're likely to be found! I won't have you here! I'm a tax-payer and a citizen, and I will not have this non-sense!

CAPTAIN FINCH [who, during the last speech of BROWN, has been trying to interrupt, at last loses his temper]. Damn it, sir—

BROWN. Don't swear at me, sir.

CAPTAIN FINCH. I tell you, the enemy — the enemy's army — may be here, sir — here at any moment!

BROWN. Well, sir, what of that? Is that any reason why *my* house should be turned into a tea-garden—I should say, a bear-garden? I'm not afraid. So now, perhaps—

[A few distant shots are heard during this speech. COLOR SERGEANT comes in from garden, quite cool and collected, and reports.]

COLOR SERGEANT. They're firing in our front, sir.

[At the same time JACKSON rushes in, wildly excited, but hugely pleased].

JACKSON [shouts]. I say, they've kicked off over there!

[At this the CAPTAIN rushes about, placing the men—here and there—at the windows. No one quite knows where to go, but all stand boldly at open windows, and BROWN stands addressing a non-interested crowd. At the signs of something really happening his talk gets slower, and his voice drops and he remains alone. The girls remain close to the fireplace with SYD, who came in after BROWN. GEOFFREY, full of interest, as he would be looking on at a football match, is standing on a table to get a good view out of the windows, over the heads of the men defending it.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. [looking out of all windows]. Now, then, keep a good lookout; if you see anything, fire at it.

[VOLUNTEERS load.]

What is that?

[Present.]

No, don't fire; it's one of our own!

[There is a moment's absolute quiet, with a faint noise of distant firing, when the swish of a bullet coming in through the window is heard, and the noise of a body being hit—a noise like a racket-ball hit against clay—and a crash. GEOFFREY just falls, quietly and limply, shot through the heart, and small statuet over mantelpiece falls—broken.]

END OF THE SECOND ACT

THE THIRD ACT

THE THIRD ACT

SAME scene, one hour later. The room is a little more knocked about—some splinters out of piano and window-frames. It has been under distant shell fire. Window openings toward enemy have been barricaded and strengthened with mattresses, rolls of carpets, rugs, and matting. There is a smell of gunpowder. When curtain rises, old BROWN is on hearthrug, back to fire. A wounded man is by bookcase; MAGGIE is kneeling at his head, arranging cushions; PAUL behind her, helping. Four Volunteers are at window, looking out. AMY, crouching by fireplace, quietly crying. When curtain is right up, noise and flash of bursting shell outside. Maroon, followed by distant artillery fire at intervals. Boom and pom-pom. This continues through Act, but is stopped just before a shell passes over or where there is a maroon. AMY gives a slight scream—like a hiccough—and puts her hands to her ears.

BROWN. Damn them!

FIRST VOLUNTEER. Fairly got the range—now.

SECOND VOLUNTEER. One-sided sort of game, I call this.

PAUL. Maggie, I do wish you'd go.

MAGGIE. Where do you want me to go to?

PAUL. Anywhere out of this. It's safest in the hall; nothing could touch you there, and you could sit there till it's over.

MAGGIE. What should I do all alone there in the hall—just sit there and shudder?

PAUL. But you'd be safer.

MAGGIE. No, Paul, I couldn't stand it. I'd rather stay here and do something. [Bends over wounded man.] Amy! [Louder] Amy!

AMY [jerks out a high-pitched hysterical] Yes!

MAGGIE. Go and get me some water.

AMY [frightened, and speaks in a sort of shuddering way, but totters about doing all that she is told to do]. Water—yes, water. [Totters slowly and feebly to the door.] What shall I bring it in?

MAGGIE. A jug, and bring a glass.

AMY. Water—in a jug; and a glass.

[Exits.]

[Enter CAPTAIN FINCH through centre window. He is still very fussy and excited, irritable, etc.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. Two more men hit out there—curse these fellows! Why don't they come closer

and let us have a go at them? [Sees wounded man.] Hullo, what's this?

PAUL. Hit in the chest, sir—shrapnel bullet—about ten minutes ago.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Who is it? What's his name, eh? Can't you tell me what his name is?

PAUL. I don't know him, sir—never seen him before to-day.

THIRD VOLUNTEER [at down-stage window]. I think it's a man named Green, sir.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Is he in my Company?

MAGGIE. Yes; his name is Green, and he's in your Company.

PAUL. I'm afraid it's pretty serious.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Can't we do anything for him? What's the good of this? Isn't there a doctor or something here—anywhere?

PAUL. I don't know.

CAPTAIN FINCH. There was one, I know; I heard them shouting for him when we were leaving Brentwood. But I don't know where he's to be found. Can't you do anything?

MAGGIE. I don't know how to stop the bleeding. I'm so useless.

[Shell passing over and exploding. Enter AMY with jug of water and

glass just as another shell crash is heard outside. She sways against door-post as the shell bursts. Hoarse screams of a man hit outside dying off into groans. Voice of COLOR SERGEANT outside.]

COLOR SERGEANT. Now then, my lad, not so much noise about it.

[Cross FINCH down to window and PAUL up. AMY totters across to MAGGIE, gives her the glass and jug, and sinks down by window-seat. PAUL goes to window.]

BROWN. Curse them! curse them!

[MAGGIE lifts wounded man's head and gives him water.]

AMY. Ada's under the sofa in the dining-room.

MAGGIE. What for?

AMY. Hiding, I think. I told her it was no good —no one would look for her. I believe she's got the funks.

MAGGIE. Do you know where Sydney is?

AMY. No, I didn't see him—haven't seen him since he ran out of the room.

[Shudders and back to fireplace.]

CAPTAIN FINCH [since shell burst has been fussily

looking out of window, searching ground with field-glasses]. I think I can see something—some men—two or three over there. [To PAUL.] Here, you! Do you see — over there — at the edge of those trees? There now, they're moving—can't you see them?

PAUL. No, sir. Which trees?

CAPTAIN FINCH [up to PAUL]. Why, those tall trees—straight over the corner of that fence. Don't you see now?

FIRST VOLUNTEER. I think I can see something, but they're a long way off.

PAUL. I think it's out of range—that wood.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Nonsense. Of course it isn't. Have a shot at them anyway.

[FIRST VOLUNTEER takes a long, steady aim, and fires.]

CAPTAIN FINCH [looking steadily with glasses]. That hasn't moved them.

PAUL. You never put your sight up.

CAPTAIN FINCH [up to window]. Damn it, man, what's the good of that? Put your sight up. You want a nurse—shove it up to a thousand yards, and try again.

SECOND VOLUNTEER. More than that; I think it's a good mile.

THIRD VOLUNTEER. No, it isn't; I bet it's not half a mile.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Well, I say it's a thousand yards; try that, do you hear? Now, have another shot—see if you can't shift 'em.

[FIRST VOLUNTEER fires again.]

You know, I don't think they are men, after all. Oh, damn these things; I can't get 'em focussed. [Hands glasses to PAUL.] Here, you have a try.

[Shell just outside; little scream from AMY; muttered oath from old BROWN; slight start back by group at window. Enter DOCTOR at window door, covered with mud splashed up by bursting shell.]

DOCTOR. Can I do anything for you? I'm a doctor.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Oh, a doctor; that's good. Do anything? I should think you could. There are four or five outside.

DOCTOR. I've seen them—only one I could do anything for.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Here's a man here rather bad, I'm afraid. His name's Green. He was hit in the chest somewhere—by a shrapnel bullet.

[Back to window.]

DOCTOR [who has gone toward wounded man].

Ah, yes! [To MAGGIE.] Allow me, please. [Kneels down in MAGGIE's place; MAGGIE stands between him and man's feet.] Have you done anything?

MAGGIE. I didn't know what to do. He's bleeding a good deal, and I can't stop it.

DOCTOR. Can you get me some water in a basin?

MAGGIE. Amy, bring some water in a basin.

AMY [jerks up and totters to door]. Water in a basin—water in a basin.

[As she enters door, enter JACKSON; they almost collide.]

JACKSON. I beg your pardon.

DOCTOR. And a sponge.

AMY. All right. Water in a basin—and a sponge.

[Exits.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. Hullo, Jackson, what is it? Have you got anything to report—got any men hit? Have you seen anything? How are you getting on? Eh?

JACKSON [very cheerfully]. No, we haven't seen anything. It's getting a bit dull up there, and we're rather tired of waiting for the fun to begin. I hope it won't be much longer. I came down to tell you about the fire—we're trying to put it out.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Putting the fire out! What fire?

[Enter COLOR SERGEANT. Salutes.]

COLOR SERGEANT. The roof's on fire, sir.

[BROWN looks up, shakes his fist at the heavens, and mutters a curse.]

CAPTAIN FINCH [angry]. The roof! Who set fire to it?

COLOR SERGEANT [aggrieved]. The enemy, sir—shell fire.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Well, put it out.

JACKSON. We've tried to—jolly hard; but we've only got one pail and a water-jug, and we're getting the water out of a cistern.

[AMY enters with basin and sponge; goes across behind FINCH to DOCTOR, and gives it to him.]

And the cistern is nearly empty, and the fire doesn't seem to mind it much.

CAPTAIN FINCH. But, look here, you know what 'll happen if you can't put it out?

JACKSON. Well, I suppose it will go on burning.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Of course it will; I know that. But what I mean is, will you be able to stop there?

JACKSON [going]. Oh, we'll stop there as long as we can, you bet!

CAPTAIN FINCH. But what will you do if you can't?

JACKSON [at door]. Why, we'll come down here, I suppose.

[Exits.]

COLOR SERGEANT [has been standing at attention behind CAPTAIN]. A good many fires broken out on the right, sir. We sha'n't be able to hold on here much longer.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Don't talk nonsense, Color Sergeant! Of course we can hold on. Who's to turn us out? There, you go back to your men and keep your eyes open—expect we shall be attacked before long.

[COLOR SERGEANT salutes and exits.]

[FINCH up with him; AMY across front.]

BROWN. Curse it all, sir, are you going to let these blackguards have it all their own way?

CAPTAIN FINCH. What do you mean? What can we do to 'em?

BROWN. Why don't you let them have it?

[Maroon.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. Eh?

BROWN. Why don't you fire, sir?

CAPTAIN FINCH. There's nothing to fire at.

[Pause. CAPTAIN goes to window. Shell. Shout in garden.]

BROWN. They seem to have something to fire at!

CAPTAIN FINCH. Yes. But they've got something to fire with. They've got guns.

BROWN. Then why don't you fire at them? Call yourself a soldier, indeed!

CAPTAIN FINCH. Because, Mr. Brown, the guns are a long way off, and we can't see them, and we don't know where they are.

BROWN [snorts]. Disgusting ignorance!

[DOCTOR has been sponging wound, plugging it with cotton wool, etc., and is bandaging it. This is only implied by his action; actual detail hidden by MAGGIE standing between him and audience.]

DOCTOR [to MAGGIE]. You know, you ladies oughtn't to be here; it's too exposed. That officer should have sent you away.

MAGGIE. He tried to, but we refused; we'd rather stay here.

DOCTOR. Why?

MAGGIE. Oh, I couldn't go away. I feel safer here doing something. Besides, I shouldn't know where to go. I'd rather stay here.

DOCTOR. But, you see, you're no good here. I

don't wish to be unkind, but you don't know anything. You can't be of any use, so you'd much better be out of danger.

[CAPTAIN FINCH down to window. PAUL on chair.]

MAGGIE. No, I've never learned. I know I'm no use, but I must stay here.

PAUL [at window with glasses—having got chair, standing up on it]. Hullo, I believe I see some of them advancing—some skirmishers.

CAPTAIN FINCH. No—do you? Where are they? [Sets chair at back of him.] Where are they? Show me.

PAUL [handing the glasses]. Do you see that field over that white house there?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Which white house?

[Chair in front of PAUL.]

PAUL [pointing]. That one—there—with the two tall chimneys.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Yes, yes—I see, but I don't see any skirmishers.

PAUL. They're not there. Do you see the field over the white house?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Of course I do. Well?

PAUL. Well, right away at the right top corner of that field— Do you see, behind the fence—there—

there—now there are some men coming through it—a few. Do you see?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Yes. By Jove, now I see them! Let's open fire at 'em.

PAUL. I think it's better not to. They're a long way off—out of range, I should say. Better reserve our fire till they get closer, and then let 'em have it hot.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Perhaps you're right.

PAUL. We might take the range of some closer objects, sir, so that when they get there—

CAPTAIN FINCH. When they get where?

PAUL. Why, when they get to one of those objects we shall know the range.

CAPTAIN FINCH. By Jove, that's a splendid idea! How shall we do it?

PAUL. With a range-finder.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Why, yes; of course. Don't think we've got one, though. Better ask the Color Sergeant; he'll know.

PAUL. I'll go and ask him, sir.

[Exits.]

DOCTOR [getting up, looks at patient and turns to CAPTAIN FINCH]. There, I can't do any more.

CAPTAIN FINCH [steps off chair; pulls DOCTOR away]. What do you think of him?

[Down centre from chair.]

DOCTOR. Oh, he's done for!

CAPTAIN FINCH. Can't you do anything—anything more, I mean?

DOCTOR. No. I've got nothing with me. [Putting on coat.] Don't think I could have saved him in any case. You see, I wasn't prepared for this. It was all such a hurried business—hadn't time to bring anything. Can't get anything here except a few bandages—very few—and some cotton wool. I've just plugged the wound to stop the bleeding. There's bad internal hemmorrhage—right lung perforated, I fancy. He'll die—soon too. Well, I must be off.

CAPTAIN FINCH. I say, do you know anything—how things are going, I mean?

DOCTOR. Not much. There was some rather hot work right over on that flank [pointing], and the enemy's skirmishers were driven back. They haven't shown up since. Nothing but artillery fire, which we can't answer.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Ah, we had a few of them trying it on soon after we got here, but they didn't stay long. They didn't do much harm—killed a man, though; not one of mine—wretched civilian, belonged to the house. We drove 'em off though.

[Up to window.]

MAGGIE [has been talking to wounded man]. Amy!

[DOCTOR, centre.]

AMY. Yes?

MAGGIE. Get me a pencil and some paper.

AMY. Pencil and paper. [Going.] Pencil and paper—pencil and paper.

[Exits slowly. Shell. She suddenly bangs door.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. If we have to move from here, what shall I do with the wounded?

DOCTOR. One of them can walk all right. Better send him off at once to the rear. You must carry the rest.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Carry them? How?

DOCTOR. Stretchers.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Where shall I get the stretchers?

DOCTOR. I don't know, I'm sure. Didn't you bring any with you?

CAPTAIN FINCH. No, I never thought of it. Don't think any one thought of it. I shouldn't have known where to find them if I had thought of it. But I had no time to think of anything. We were just bundled off anyhow.

DOCTOR. Well, you'll have to leave them, that's all. Take them out, and lay them down out there.

Perhaps we shan't move. Anyway, I shall hang about.

[Enter AMY with paper, etc., which she gives to MAGGIE.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. Are there many wounded?

DOCTOR. Yes, a goodish number.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Are you coming back again? Where shall I find you if I want you? Have you got a hospital or anything?

DOCTOR. I tell you there's nothing—absolutely nothing—except a little cotton wool and some bandages.

[Shell passing over and exploding.]

[Exits.]

[CAPTAIN up to window and back again. MAGGIE is writing letter for wounded man, AMY gives him water. Enter PAUL.]

PAUL. Color Sergeant says he hasn't got a range-finder, sir. But he's already got several ranges from trial shots. Here they are.

[Hands a paper.]

[Shell passing over and exploding.]

CAPTAIN FINCH [takes paper, puts on spectacles, and reads]. "Small house, 500 yards." Which small house?

PAUL [while CAPTAIN FINCH is putting on spectacles]. The one, sir, with the red roof. The Golf Club.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Bend in the road—yes—800 yards. Do you think they're all right?

[Rise go to window.]

PAUL. He says they're quite accurate enough, sir, for the class of shot we've got.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Well, where are those men now? [On chair.] Can we see them? Are they coming closer? Have you been watching them?

PAUL. They're moving mighty slow, but they're a bit thicker, I fancy.

CAPTAIN FINCH [looking at the paper]. We'll open fire when they get to the farm buildings, eh? Don't you think so? That would be a good range, I think.

PAUL. They won't be there for some time at the rate they're moving. What's the Color Sergeant judge that? Seems a long way off.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Calls it 1,500, with a query after it.

PAUL. Yes, he said he wasn't very certain of that one. Anyway, I think it's too far. We haven't got too much ammunition—only about fifty rounds a man served out. Better keep it till it's likely to tell.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Seems a pity not to scare them a little first, don't you think?

PAUL. None of these men can shoot, from what the Color Sergeant tells me. Some of 'em never fired a round except on a miniature range. They won't do much scaring.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Oh, well, have it your own way. Perhaps you're right. I'm going to see the men. [As he is about to exit he meets REGGIE.] Hullo! who are you?

REGGIE [amazed]. Who am I?

[CAPTAIN FINCH exits up-stairs, not waiting for answer.]

[Enter REGGIE. He is rather travel-stained, but quite calm—stodgy, in fact.]

REGGIE. Hullo, Paul, you here?

PAUL. Looks like it. Where have you been?

[Still on chair; gets off it, and goes to window.]

REGGIE. Oh, all over the place, having a look. Well, pa, what became of you? You ought to have stuck to me. I've seen a good deal, I can tell you.

BROWN [grunts]. Hope you're pleased with it.

REGGIE. No, I'm not! From what I have seen,

I can't say I'm impressed with the intelligence of those who are running this show.

BROWN. Idiots, I expect, every man Jack of them!

REGGIE. You're about right, pa. I don't think there's any sense in the whole thing. I talked to a good many of the officers, and told them what I thought ought to be done. But it wasn't much good —they wouldn't take a hint, though it was kindly meant. I only wanted to help them. A stupid lot, I think. Regular officers, too, some of them were— seemed to be in authority, and running the show. It's quite right what the papers were always saying —they don't know their job. That's bad enough, but where I blame them is they won't listen to a man who's got some common-sense in him, and only wants to help 'em out.

BROWN. They ought to be hanged. They're responsible for this.

REGGIE. That's what I say, and what I told 'em. But, bless you, they don't seem to feel it. I told them that they were paid to defend the country, and if this was the way they did it, we didn't get value for our money.

BROWN. They ought to be hanged on every lamp-post!

REGGIE. I let them know my opinion, I assure you.

But they're a thick-skinned lot—some of them rather wanting in manners, too.

LINDSAY [outside]. Where's Captain Finch?

[AMY crosses to table.]

COLOR SERGEANT. Inside the house, sir.

VOICE. Send a man to hold my horse, please, Color Sergeant.

[Enter CAPTAIN LINDSAY, the Adjutant.]

ADJUTANT. Captain Finch here?

PAUL. Yes, sir, he's in the next room. Shall I call him?

ADJUTANT. Yes, please. Say I want to see him. Tell him the Adjutant, Captain Lindsay, wants him.

[Two shells passing over and exploding.]

[Exit PAUL.]

[To men at window]. Anything to shoot at?

VOLUNTEER. Not yet, sir.

[Shell.]

ADJUTANT. Then what's the good of standing there, exposing yourselves? Get down under cover. What's the good of taking risks?—wall's no good against rifle fire. But shrapnel at this range won't hurt—if you lie low. Standing up like that, you may get hit.

VOLUNTEER. We're not frightened.

ADJUTANT. Didn't say you were, but you're damned foolish.

[Enter CAPTAIN FINCH.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. Hullo, Lindsay, what is it—what's happening? Have you got any orders? Are we beating them? What are we going to do?

ADJUTANT [coolly]. We are going to retire.

[Lights pipe.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. Retire? What for?

BROWN. Retire? Never!

REGGIE. Nonsense! Why should we retire? What's the point of retiring?

CAPTAIN FINCH. I say, Lindsay, surely we could hold on here. Is there any reason for us to retire?

ADJUTANT [not noticing the question]. Finch, you shouldn't have allowed these people to stop here. They're in the way. You should have ordered them out.

CAPTAIN FINCH. I tried to make them see that when I got here, but they simply refused to move.

BROWN. If by the expression "these people" you are alluding to me and my family, let me tell you, sir, that we have more right here than you. This is my house, and it would be a pretty state of things if any jackanapes in uniform could order an Englishman off his own property!

ADJUTANT [looks at him, but doesn't answer]. And these ladies, Finch, they really must go; it's not safe for them—you must send them away before you retire.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Oh, all right, but do tell me why we are to retire. There must be some reason.

ADJUTANT [dryly]. There are—several. One of them is—we can't stay.

BROWN. Can't stay! Don't want to stay.

ADJUTANT. Another is, we've done all that we were sent here for.

BROWN. Damn it, you've done nothing!

ADJUTANT. And perhaps the best of all, it is an order—as Kim says.

REGGIE. Well, I don't know who "Kim" may be, but I should like to give him my opinion of him.

BROWN. He ought to be hanged—whatever his rank is!

CAPTAIN FINCH. But I say, Lindsay, do explain it a little. Can't you tell me something? You see, we've no notion of what's been going on. They aren't pressing us; we could hold on here for hours.

ADJUTANT. My dear Finch, that's not the point, even if it were true—which it isn't.

BROWN. I say we could hold on here forever.

ADJUTANT [to FINCH]. Who is this British bulldog?

CAPTAIN FINCH. Oh, he's the owner of this house.

ADJUTANT. Of course; I believe he mentioned it just now. I can understand his feelings. Now, look here, we've done all that was expected of us.

CAPTAIN FINCH. But we haven't won.

ADJUTANT. Yes, we have, we've won time. Not much, but enough, I fancy, with a scratch crowd of a few hundreds—without guns. We've kept thousands of these Johnnies monkeying about for some hours. Doesn't seem much, but every minute was precious and means another Company in position, and now we can't hold on any longer and aren't wanted to. We just vanish in a blaze—or rather under cover of one.

CAPTAIN FINCH. But when do we retire? And how? And where do we go to?

ADJUTANT. Usual direction to the rear. Now look here, Finch. The right's going first, and you'll be the last to flit. Don't move till you see the lot on your right here are off. Then get away cleverly—few at a time, extended. Collect them below and close on the centre—once you're out of sight get a move on.

[Shell.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. But what will the enemy do when we're gone? What will they think we've gone for?

BROWN. Think that you're cowards.

ADJUTANT. Don't know what they'll think, and don't care. What they'll do isn't so difficult to imagine—come after us. They'll waste time over this township, though, and we shall get clear.

CAPTAIN FINCH. What will they do here?

[Shell.]

ADJUTANT. Well, there won't be much left for them to do. They'll look for us, perhaps, but they won't find us—see?

[CAPTAIN FINCH up to window.]

BROWN. More shame to you. They will find me.

ADJUTANT. If you take my advice, you gentlemen will start at once, taking these ladies with you.

BROWN. You advise me to run away from these scoundrels—me? I shall stay here and defy them.

ADJUTANT. That's your own affair entirely. But please tell these ladies to go away now.

BROWN. Certainly not. They know—er—what is expected of them.

CAPTAIN FINCH. But, I say, Lindsay, they will come after us, won't they? We shall give them a fight, sha'n't we? We mustn't let these fellows think they've beaten us, eh?

ADJUTANT. Don't you be afraid. If they think that, it won't last long. Back over there is a British

Army — horse, foot, and dragoons — in position. Ready, thanks to us, mind you, and willing — oh yes, damned willing—not to mention able—to knock all the extra swelling out of their heads.

CAPTAIN FINCH. No—really? By Jove, that's quick work!

ADJUTANT. It's splendid work—considering. But they've done it, from all we hear. Brought 'em up by train, motors, 'buses—every blessed thing that could move has been making the roads hot. The motor 'buses breaking the time limit, chock-a-block with Guardsmen and Blue-jackets, have been one of the most cheering sights ever seen, a fellow on the staff said, fairly lapping over each other, and policemen cheering them on instead of taking their number.

[Enter JACKSON.]

JACKSON. I say, Finch—oh, I beg pardon. Good-morning, sir. We can't stay up there any longer, it's too smoky; we couldn't see anything if we did stop, and I don't think we really can.

ADJUTANT. Considering the state of the roof, I think you've done jolly well to stay up so long. However, it doesn't matter now. Come down—eh, Finch? Let them come down, and then get the rest of your men out in the grounds here.

CAPTAIN FINCH. Right, sir. You understand, Jackson? Take these men out that way, and then the men up-stairs. Never mind, I'll go and see about them.

[Exits, followed by JACKSON.]

PAUL. The enemy are a bit closer now. Shall we fire at them?

[Few shots from enemy heard.]

ADJUTANT [looks]. Yes, you can have a few shots. Don't throw your ammunition away—just a shot now and then, to keep them thinking, and do, for goodness' sake, keep down and don't expose yourselves. And now, Mr.—er—now, sir, I warn you that you'd better get away. The house, I'm sorry to say, seems pretty well alight, and you may be roughly handled when the enemy gets here. Soldiers who've just captured a position aren't too gentle in their manners, and they may—

BROWN. And pray, sir, whose fault is it that the enemy will capture the position? I am not afraid of them—I have no fear of exposing myself. Let them come, I say, as rough as you please, and I will stay here and defend my house and my country, even if those who are paid to do so haven't the pluck.

ADJUTANT. Now, look here, sir, you're talking rot! I'm fed up with your pluck—you can stop here and make an ass of yourself for all I care—only I

warn you, you'll get into bad trouble if you attempt to do anything to defend your house—or your country, as you call it. Let me tell you, you've no right to defend anything—you're a civilian; you've no uniform, and you're not allowed to defend your country. You may consider yourself a perfect mass of patriotism, but you'd be better employed cursing yourself for not having earned the right to defend your own country than cursing and slandering those real patriots who have!

[Exits.]

[Shell and distant musketry.]

BROWN. Impertinent puppy!

REGGIE. They're all that, these army officers. Think they're the only people who know anything, when, between you and me, they know less than most. All the same, he's right in one thing: there is no point in staying here, as far as I can see, if these fellows are all going to bolt!

[Some rapid firing out in the garden, encouraged and directed by the COLOR SERGEANT.]

COLOR SERGEANT [outside in garden]. Steady there! Steady!

[FINCH crosses from door to opening. Long whistle; firing gradually stops.]

COLOR SERGEANT [voice heard outside]. Cease firing—cease firing! You must pay attention to the whistle, and don't fire wildly like that—it's a great waste of ammunition!

REGGIE. What are you going to do? Better come away. We can do no good here—wasted, I think.

BROWN. I shall most assuredly stop here.

REGGIE. Well, it's a free country, but I think you're wrong. I'm off—I shall put a few things together, and then go and see what's happening. I shall probably sleep at Aunt Emily's to-night, and advise you to get there too. This won't last long, and you girls had better come with me. No point in stopping here. Of course, you will be rather in the way, but I'll find you somewhere to go, and you'll be safer with me. Come along, Maggie — now then, Amy, wake up!

MAGGIE. No, Reggie, I shall stay here with Dad.

REGGIE [has caught sight of the papers on the floor—collects them]. Oh, well, do what you like. Pity to leave these; they were pretty useful, I think. Come, Amy!

[Effect at exit.]

[No answer from AMY, who is rather collapsed at foot of sofa.]

[Exit to hall.]

PAUL. Might try a shot at them now, I think. I think—there, see! Where that bunch of them is—quick—sight's eight—no, nine hundred yards. Now, steady aim. [Sights one man's rifle for him.] There. [Points.] Now!

[They all fire, and look to see where their shots go.]

PAUL. Nowhere near them, I should say.

[Enter JACKSON.]

JACKSON. Finch! I say, Finch! Here [to PAUL], where's Captain Finch?

PAUL. He's up-stairs.

JACKSON. No, he's not, he must be out there with the Color Sergeant.

PAUL. What do you want him for?

JACKSON. Well, the next lot on our right are shoving off. [Goes to centre window door.] We shall have to skip now.

[Enter REGGIE, rather excited; has a greatcoat on him, and the pockets are bulging with things in them.]

REGGIE. I say, come along quickly; you can't stop here another minute—every one's going! The roof's well alight, and will fall any minute! It's absurd! Come! I could hardly get up-stairs to get some things. Come along!

[Stony stare from old BROWN.]

Maggie, are you coming? [Silence.] Well, Amy, do you hear? Amy, come with me! [Goes to her and shakes her.] Rouse yourself, Amy. [Shake.] Damn it, you must come. Do you hear—the whole house is coming down. Ada's gone, and I can't find Sydney anywhere. You must come, I say!

[Hauls her and goes to door.]

[She totters after him. Exeunt. Shell. Shell.]

[CAPTAIN and JACKSON at window door.]

CAPTAIN FINCH [enters hole in wall, followed by JACKSON]. That's what you've got to do—you understand, Jackson? Get them away, well extended —you understand? And I'll join you at the bottom. Now, be quick about it. No time to waste.

JACKSON. All right.

[Runs through the room and out at door, while PAUL and three VOLUNTEERS are firing a little. Shell.]

CAPTAIN FINCH [without coming into room]. Now then, you fellows, it's time to retire. Every one out of the house— Now, come on, do you hear me?

FIRST VOLUNTEER. Here goes for another shot at the beggars! [Fires. He and the other two VOLUNTEERS come away in a slow, dawdling manner.]

CAPTAIN FINCH. Hurry up—come on! *Will* you do what I tell you?

[Leaves window. Exit.]

THIRD VOLUNTEER. Damn this retiring! I don't understand it.

PAUL. Never mind that; those are the orders—Come, out you get!

[VOLUNTEERS go out.

[Some firing by COLOR SERGEANT'S party outside. Shouts of "Color Sergeant!" by CAPTAIN. Whistle. Firing stops.]

CAPTAIN FINCH [outside]. Color Sergeant, do you hear what I say?

COLOR SERGEANT. Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN FINCH. You understand—a few men at a time while the rest keep on firing.

COLOR SERGEANT. Yes, sir, I understand.

[Shell. Shell. Enemy's musketry.]

Now then, let 'em have it!

[Firing. Sparks begin to fall from the roof.]

PAUL. Now, Mr. Brown—every one is retiring.

BROWN. Cowards!

[Whistle outside—firing ceases.]

PAUL. Maggie, you must go away. You can't stay here—you can do no more for that poor fellow!

MAGGIE. No, Paul, he's dead.

PAUL. Come, Maggie!

MAGGIE. Don't go away, Paul, don't—stay here with me!

PAUL. Oh, my dear! my dear! I mustn't stop!—my job is over there with the others.

[Shell.]

You must go—you can't stay here.

[Musketry. Distant shouts. Whistle.]

COLOR SERGEANT [outside]. Now then, you on the right, off you get—extend! Extend!

PAUL. But you can't, Maggie! You can't! It's all right for your father. He's a man—they won't hurt him. But for you, Maggie, it's impossible! Come with me—now!

MAGGIE. Where to, Paul?

PAUL. Back there with the rest.

[Points. Shell. Shell.]

MAGGIE. Oh, I can't dear! I can't! I can't leave him—father—all alone. But you stay, Paul, you can stay. Stop with me always! It doesn't

matter what happens if you stay with me! Oh, Paul —Paul—don't go!

[Noise outside repeated, as before.]

COLOR SERGEANT [outside]. Now, away you go! Keep down—keep down! Don't show yourselves!

PAUL [to MAGGIE]. I must; it's my duty.

MAGGIE. What difference will one make, over there with all those others? Stay with me—I want you!

[Shell. Noise. Shouting, etc.

[Enter SYDNEY, crying, hysterical.]

SYDNEY. Maggie! Maggie! I'm frightened! I can't find any one. Take me away!

[MAGGIE takes him in her arms.]

MAGGIE. Sydney, Sydney darling! Where have you been? There, there, you must go away—with Paul. He'll look after you. Paul will take you away with him—won't you, Paul?

SYDNEY. No, no, I want to go with you, Maggie. I won't go—I won't go with any one else!

MAGGIE. Come then, dear—we'll go together. There, there, Sydney, don't blub, old man! No one will hurt you—come along, dear. [Takes him out by window door.] Come, Paul, I'll start with you. [Aside] And you can look after Syd when I come back.

[PAUL has a look out of the window at the enemy; then looks at BROWN, shrugs his shoulders, and follows.]

PAUL. This way, Maggie!

[Exeunt quickly.]

[Enemy's shouts nearer. Shouts from COLOR SERGEANT.]

COLOR SERGEANT. Now then, away you go, Corporal Banks; get your men off quickly, then—now!

[Last burst of firing. Shell. Shell. Old BROWN standing by fireplace, sparks falling outside, rolling smoke, last few dropping shots fired as the last of COLOR SERGEANT'S party are retiring. Occasional shell, distant hum of shouts of enemy coming closer. He stalks to window and looks out.]

BROWN. Curse them! Oh, curse them all!

[An occasional bullet strikes the brickwork outside, and one or two at intervals hum through the open window and strike something inside. BROWN comes down, picks up rifle

of dead soldier, looks at it, goes to window, points it, and pulls trigger —no result. Throws it down, then slowly picks it up again, moves to middle of room and fiddles with it. At last opens it, closes it, opens it again, looks round, sees bandolier cut off dead soldier by the DOCTOR, picks it up, takes it to window, then slowly and with clumsiness loads the rifle. Stands full upright and fires straight front, exposing self, watching effect, slowly repeats the process. A bullet hits window-sill. BROWN, who has been acting like a man in a dream—a sort of automaton—seems to wake up. He becomes from instinct a fighting man. He takes cover, crouches in left corner of window, he takes aim, he fires with more interest and quicker. The lust of battle comes over him. After one shot he gives a wild shout of triumph. After another, he shouts "Another!" The enemy's shouts show they are getting near—nearer

—quite near. They are in the house, running about, smashing open doors. The door opens with a crash, two bearded Infantrymen rush in. First one takes a hurried shot at BROWN, who is still firing out of window—misses him—and then rushes at him with bayonet lowered. BROWN turns, clubs his rifle, swings the butt down on the soldier's bayonet, turns it, then, with all his might, hits him straight between the eyes and fells him. The second soldier is just going to stick him when enter PRINCE YOLAND, door up left.]

YOLAND. What is this? Why! [Looks round.] Ah! it is my friend, Mr. Brown. Let him be.

OFFICER. He's been fighting. He killed one of my men as we came up.

YOLAND. What is that? [Sternly.] You have been fighting; you have no right—

BROWN. No right, you blackguards! No right! It's you that have no right. It's my house you're attacking.

YOLAND. You're not a soldier.

BROWN. Bah! What does that matter? I'm an Englishman.

[YOLAND brushes him off.]

YOLAND. Take him out and shoot him.

BROWN. What do you say?

YOLAND. You are a civilian; you have been fighting. I am sorry you must pay the penalty.

BROWN. Very well. [Pause.] I'm ready.

[YOLAND salutes him.]

[Exit. Just at his exit MAGGIE enters.]

MAGGIE. My father! What are you doing with him?

YOLAND. I regret, lady, your father is a prisoner.

MAGGIE. A prisoner—what for? He is an old man. He is not a soldier. Why do you make him a prisoner? He can do no harm.

YOLAND. He is a civilian, and he was fighting. He killed some of my men.

MAGGIE. But he will not be a prisoner for long. You will let him go. He will soon be free.

[Volley off right.]

[Exits screaming.]

YOLAND. It's a pity, but it can't be helped.

[Taking out map and sitting down.]

OFFICER. Do we stay here, sir?

[Crosses to fireplace.]

YOLAND [picking up chair and sitting right of table.] Yes, here in what the late owner called "An Englishman's Home."

OFFICER. For how long, sir?

THE END

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